No. 23 January-March 1958

SOVIET SURVEY

A Quarterly Review of Cultural Trends

SPECIAL NUMBER

SCIENCE, FICTION, and SCIENCE - FICTION

Gustav Wetter — **Dialectical Materialism and Natural Science**

Helen Rapp — **Noddy and the Commissar**

Ernest Gellner — **Knowledge and Communism**

Gleb Struve — **Dead Souls and Living Reputations**

THREE SHILLINGS

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

UNDER FIRE

Comments on Western authors in the Soviet press

J. B. Priestley

Why does a man who has never protested against atom and hydrogen bombs protest against the artificial satellite and interplanetary flights? . . . It is characteristic of Priestley that he is in conflict with science as a whole, and not only with Soviet science. . . . Priestley dislikes what is equally disliked by Dulles, Adenauer, and Macmillan, the men who deliberately keep the world 'on the brink of war.' The writer J. B. Priestley blows their trumpet; this is the depth to which he has sunk (*Tvorba*, October 31, 1957).

Priestley declared recently: 'The atomic war is a war against humanity. It is not the same kind of war as before. It is suicide. Under no conditions should Great Britain use nuclear weapons even for self-defence' (*Literaturnaya Gazeta*, January 7, 1958).

George F. Kennan

In 1947 in an article published in the American magazine, *Foreign Affairs*, and signed 'X,' Kennan proclaimed the inevitability of war between the USSR and the USA and the necessity of pursuing a 'policy of containment' *vis-à-vis* the USSR. . . . It is interesting that Kennan's work on his new book, *Russia Leaves the War*, as he admits himself, was paid for by the Rockefeller fund, which this tycoon uses to secure in the works he subsidises an orientation corresponding to the interests of the American ruling circles (*Novaya i Noveishaya Istoria*, No. 4, 1957).

Wide circles of the American population are more and more convinced of the necessity of normalisation of Soviet-American relations. . . . This disposition is reflected to a certain degree in the articles by Kennan and in his major book, *Russia Leaves the War* (*Znamya*, No. 8, 1957).

Henry A. Kissinger

In Western countries, and above all in the United States, there are influential circles which aim at the prevention of an international agreement on disarmament. In the interest of the war-industry monopolies, which make fabulous profits out of supplying arms, they search for any means, and are using various propaganda manœuvres to maintain international tension, to foment a war psychosis, and to keep the nations in fear of atomic war. Kissinger's *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, recently published in the United States, can serve as an example. . . . Kissinger tries to justify appeals for an atomic war and for a continuation of the policy 'from positions of strength' by unfounded assertions about the 'aggressiveness' of the Soviet Union, and the 'threat' which it allegedly constitutes to American security. However these lying assertions completely betray this unlucky journalist, who tries to turn the wheel of history back and to return the world to a period when the imperialist monopolies ruled with impunity in foreign countries (*Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn*, No. 12, 1957).

H. Seton-Watson

Reactionary historians crudely falsify the struggle of the Communist Party for the development of the revolutionary activity and initiative of the popular masses. . . . The Communist Party, declares H. Seton-Watson, led the fight for the Soviets in order to 'use' the 'primitive masses' in its own interests (*Znamya*, No. 11, 1957).

Merle Fainsod

The apologists of capitalism deny in the first place the material, social-economic preconditions of the October revolution. . . . Thus the American historian M. Fainsod declares that the emergence of the Soviet régime was not caused by the historical development of Russia. . . . In Fainsod's presentation the popular masses were an object, 'material in the hands of the Communist Party' (*ibid.*).

Richard Pipes

As presented by the American historian R. Pipes, the establishment of the Soviets was allegedly a result of the 'lack of enlightenment' of the masses (*ibid.*).

Continued on page three of cover

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SOVIET SURVEY

A Quarterly Review of Cultural Trends

No. 23 January-March 1958

Editor: Walter Z. Laqueur

Associate Editor: Leopold Labedz

CONTENTS

	Introduction	*Writers at Bay*	3
	Gleb Struve ...	*... Dead Souls and Living Reputations*	10
	Helen Rapp	*Noddy and the Commissar*	18
	In the Light of the Silvery Sputnik		
	Notes on Soviet Science Fiction		
I.	Walter Z. Laqueur	*Past and Present*	24
II.	Vera Alexandrova	*Fantasy and Reality*	27
III.	Z. ben Shlomo	*East and West*	31
	George Gibian	*The Lopatkins at Work*	37
	Philip Cook	*The Party Secretary in Fiction*	42
	Alfred Burmeister	*Brief Interlude*	46
	Gustav Wetter ...	*Dialectical Materialism and Natural Science*	51
	Essays in Intellectual Biography		
I.	Morris Watnick ...	*George Lukacs: or Aesthetics & Communism*	60
II.	Ernest Gellner ...	*Ernst Kolman: or Knowledge & Communism*	66
III.	Leopold Labedz ...	*Leszek Kolakowski: or Ethics & Communism*	71
	Document—English and American Literature after 1917: What the Textbooks Say		

Published by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, 104 Boulevard Haussman, Paris, 8e. Editorial and business offices, 25 Haymarket, London, S.W.1. Subscription rates 12 shillings or 2 dollars a year, post free.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TO OUR READERS

Beginning with the present number, *Soviet Survey* will be published as a quarterly magazine. There will be no change in the number of pages (one number of the quarterly *Survey* will be equal in size to three issues of the monthly publication), nor will there be a change in price.

* * *

Some of the more topical comment hitherto published by *Survey* will in future be distributed by 'Forum,' a new feature agency. Readers who wish to receive this service are requested to write to The Editor, 'Forum,' Congress for Cultural Freedom, 104 Boulevard Haussmann, Paris, 8e.

THE RUSSIAN REVIEW

An American Quarterly Devoted to Russia Past and Present

TABLE OF CONTENTS, VOL. XVII, No. 1, January, 1958

Articles

Forty Years of Soviet Communism ..... William Henry Chamberlin
The Czechoslovak Legion (Part II) ..... George F. Kennan
East Moves West: The Enigma of Vladimir Solovytov ..... Richard Hare
Soviet Cultural Diplomacy Since Stalin ..... Frederick C. Barghoorn
From Alexander Blok's 'Songs of the Lady Beautiful' (Translations) Robin Kemball
The Tolstoy Foundation ..... Paul B. Anderson

Book Reviews

Subscription, $5.00 a year, single copies $1.25, in the U.S., foreign $6.00.

THE RUSSIAN REVIEW

235 Baker Library **Hanover, N. H. U.S.A.**

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTRODUCTION

Writers at Bay

I

A SPECTRE is haunting the 'Socialist third' of the world—the spectre of the unquiet intelligentsia. All the Powers of the Communist order have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre: Khrushchev and Mao Tse-tung, Ulbricht and Kadar, party propagandists and police officials from Pankow to Peking. Intellectuals are eminently harmless people; they have neither arms nor positions of command in the political apparatus, nor an effective organisation. Why then should they be feared? Because a ferment of ideas is the implacable enemy of autocratic regimes; nothing has changed in that respect since Marx wrote the opening sentences of the *Communist Manifesto*.

It all started with the leading rôle of writers and journalists in the Polish and Hungarian events of autumn 1956. The Chinese intellectuals who in their great majority had enthusiastically welcomed Communist rule only ten years before, were found by the authorities to be in a highly dangerous mood, and a major drive, the anti-rightist campaign, was needed to restore some measure of discipline. A writers' revolt was reported even from faraway North Vietnam, while in the Soviet Union there was 'confusion' and 'muddle-headed thinking' (to quote the official reports), a 'conspiracy of keeping silent,' and what not. All this was deemed sufficiently important to warrant official intervention at the highest level (from Khrushchev downwards). Now, at the beginning of 1958, strict party control over all fields of cultural endeavour has again been restored throughout the Communist world.

The Communist attitude towards the intelligentsia has been highly ambivalent for many years past. It combines respect for learning, eagerness to study, and high social prestige for scientists (all in themselves exemplary), with distrust, suspicion, and a patronising air. For a party secretary, high or low, an intellectual is a potential trouble-maker who does not sufficiently heed the party line in his own field of study and who, moreover, is inclined to utter unorthodox opinions and views on affairs outside his own department. Intellectuals are unreliable, because in times of crisis they tend to waver, to express doubts about the party line. Instead of following the lead of the working class and the peasants (*i.e.* the communist party) they have a habit of advancing harmful ideas and theories, which is doubly reprehensible, for the intelligentsia is not even a class (by Leninist definition) but merely a 'social group' or a 'stratum.'

For this unfortunate situation various official explanations have been offered. In China the party leadership has declared that the intelligentsia are mainly of lower-middle class origin and hence have great difficulty in adapting themselves entirely to a really Communist world outlook.[1] In Russia, after forty years of Soviet rule, this argument cannot easily be applied, and there the explanations vary: Some intellectuals, it is said, suffer from weaknesses of character, others have been too much exposed to harmful Western influences. But the remedy in each case is identical: Closer study of party doctrine. Those who still persevere in their doubts and deviations have to be brought nearer to the production process, to the *condition ouvrière* (or *paysanne*): They are to be sent, in other words, to do manual work in field or factory; this, it is expected, will remove their doubts about the party line on Hungary or party control in the domain of literature or the social sciences.[2]

[1] The party leadership, which is also preponderantly of lower-middle class origin, does not, apparently, face such difficulties.

[2] In Russia this has been used merely as a threat so far. In China several hundred professors have been sent for an unspecified period (presumably until the cure is complete) to do agricultural work in outlying districts.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But the picture is by no means uniform: Stagnation and sterility in, say, Soviet philosophy, literature, and painting are coupled with spectacular progress in some fields of natural science and technology. This fact has been noted by some Communists too:

'The contrast between Soviet science and Soviet philosophy is too sharp to be ignored. This cannot be due to a difference in biological make-up between scientists and philosophers. The roots must lie in the social structure and the atmosphere in which it is built up,' says Professor Hyman Levy (in Peter Fryer's *Newsletter*, November, 1957).

This interesting phenomenon is to be studied, in some detail, in a number of contributions in the current and forthcoming issues of *Survey*. The following general observations seem valid as a basis of discussion: There is a marked difference in the attitude of the party towards 'hard' and 'soft' fields of study, the natural sciences belonging to the first category, the social sciences, arts, and literature to the second. (This differentiation is not without certain parallels in the Western world.) Party interference, especially after Stalin's death, has been far less marked in the natural sciences than elsewhere. One of the reasons (to put it crudely) is undoubtedly the fact that first-rate literature is not a *conditio sine qua non* for a great power, whereas first-rate technology is an absolute necessity. Natural scientists, in other words, should be left alone provided they pay lip service to party doctrine in general terms.

But there are other reasons. The more complex a field of study, the more difficult is it to control and supervise. Very few outsiders are in a position to pass judgment, to express an opinion of their own, on theoretical problems in physics. But everybody, or almost everybody, can judge a new novel, a painting, or a new history book. Nor do the guardians of Marxist-Leninist purity display an equal measure of interest in the different domains of science, literature, and the arts. It is quite intolerable to have unorthodox novels, modern history text books, or movies. In these fields deviations impinge directly on political doctrine and would have an undesirable effect on public opinion. The study of ancient history or the performance of slightly modernist symphonies is clearly less dangerous, because their impact both on contemporary issues and on public opinion is less immediate. It is clearly no mere coincidence that while Soviet literature suffered gravely as a result of Zhdanovism, and the Soviet film industry came to a virtual standstill in 1950-51, Soviet composers, despite all limitations, produced some works of lasting value simply because it is more difficult to control music than a film. Broadly speaking, it can be said that opportunities for creative work in a Communist régime are better, the more remote the chosen field is from direct contact with party doctrine, the more complex it is, the less susceptible to external control, the less its direct impact on public opinion.

Some of the issues involved, such as the function and importance of Leninism in the natural sciences, will be the subject of studies in future issues of *Survey*. The present number deals mainly with the current state of Soviet literature. At a first glance, 1957 would not appear to have been a bad year in Soviet literature—certainly better than most previous years. It gave the Soviet reader some important new books such as the last part of Fedin's trilogy, a new Sholokhov, Galina Nikolaeva's *The Struggle on the Road*, Pogodin's play *Petrarch's Sonnet*, new verse by Evtushenko. New literary journals abounded: *Voprosy Literatury* (dealing with literary history and criticism), *Molodaya Gvardia* and *Yunost* for young people, *Moskva* and *Literaturnaya Moskva* for the writers of the capital, and other local 'fat magazines' for writers and readers in Siberia, the Donetz, and elsewhere. The rehabilitation of some Soviet writers of the past and present continued with the publication of some of their works (as reported in detail in Professor Struve's article).

But a closer look at the contents of recent issues of both old and new magazines leaves less room for optimism. Books are not an accurate yardstick, since, though published in 1957, they were obviously written earlier. Some of the outstanding works of last year written during the freer months of 1955-56, such as Nikolaeva's and Evtushenko's, have already come in for heavy criticism. The magazines palpably reflect the growing pressure and control applied by the party leadership throughout 1957, and their

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

decline is painfully obvious; they became less interesting from month to month. October and November, 1957, were perhaps untypical, for all the magazines had to deal almost exclusively with reminiscences of 1917. But the over-all picture was not really affected. The campaign against deviationists has been examined in greater detail in a previous issue of *Survey* (September, 1957). It began with the third plenary session of the Soviet Writers' Union in May, 1957, and culminated in Khrushchev's speeches in June/July which, though less specific than the famous Zhdanov ukase of 1947, left little doubt in the minds of erring writers that they would have to comply with party instructions, or else. . . . The aim was to break the 'conspiracy of silence,' a task that was accomplished with the recantation of Margarita Aliger (*Lit. Gazeta*, October 8, 1957, in which she said that 'the origin of my mistakes was simply in my character') and others, the admission of guilt by *Novy Mir* (October, 1957), one of the worst offenders in publishing unorthodox novels and poems, and the wholesale reshuffle in the editorial boards of literary newspapers and periodicals.

To those deviationists who wanted to enlist the aid of Lenin and who pointed to the greater measure of freedom enjoyed in the early days of Soviet rule, it was explained that their historical references were quite wrong: Lenin had not hesitated to shut down oppositionist socialist magazines (A. Karaganov in *Voprosy Literatury*, 1957, 1). The opponents of socialist realism in the 'socialist camp' in Poland and Yugoslavia were attacked in a great many articles; no attempt whatever was made to discuss with them the questions in dispute; there was simply the repetition, *a priori*, of 'we are right and they are wrong.' There was even a partial whitewashing of Stalin: It was explained that some of his 'mistakes' had already been corrected during his lifetime—as in the theory of lack of conflict (Franz Leschnitzer, reporting from Moscow, in *Neue Deutsche Literatur*, October 1957).

Yet the campaign was not a complete success. A. Surkov, the new President of the Writers' Union, complained in a long speech that trends and ideas already exorcised were reappearing and finding an outlet, though a feeble one, in some literary journals (*Moskva* 1957, 10). Many articles appeared in the literary press, and meetings of writers were held throughout the Soviet Union, but real enthusiasm is lacking. Of the three chief spokesmen for *partiinost* at the central meetings (A. Surkov, Leonid Soboliev and Valentin Kataev) only the first is a member of the party. . . . Declarations of support came in from the backwoods—the writers of Novorossiisk and Rostov were reported to have given their full support to the campaign. But the names of leading writers such as Sholokhov and Leonov were missing; Ehrenburg continued to publish mildly critical essays (on Stendhal, a hardly veiled appeal for more literary freedom, in *Inostrannaya Literatura*); Konstanin Simonov and Daniel Granin were charged with failing to make their recantation sufficiently sweeping. None of the leading writers of the younger generation who had come to the fore during the past few years was heard in the new campaign for more orthodoxy. The keynote speeches were given by men and women who may have merit as party functionaries but who have so far no known connection with Soviet literature.

The Khrushchev speeches on literature were scheduled to become the new gospel, and they are as much quoted now (cult of personality or not) as the Stalin-Zhdanov instructions were ten years ago. But the approach is perfunctory, and there are even touches of hardly veiled irreverence that would have been quite unthinkable in 1948. Asked to comment on the Khrushchev speeches, Shostakovich took as his clue the case of one well-known Ukrainian writer who had been unjustly attacked by Kaganovich as a 'nationalist.' Hence Shostakovich's conclusions: Such things should never happen again; no name calling, no personal attacks. In other words, Shostakovich singled out for comment the one issue that had nothing whatever to do with Khrushchev's central theme, the case for stricter regimentation. He skilfully made use of an irrelevant aside directed by Khrushchev against Kaganovich to reach a conclusion diametrically opposed to Khrushchev's central thesis of the necessity for more control.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This little incident is revealing in more ways than one. The second thaw is definitely over, and it would be unduly optimistic to expect anything of more than routine interest in Soviet literature during the next year or two. The new thought control is certainly not so severe as it was in 1947-53, and yet resentment and mute opposition are far more widespread now than under Zhdanov and Stalin. At that time many Soviet writers apparently believed that there was no other way, now they realise that this is not so, and they also know what the literary results of the Stalin-Zhdanov era have been: Soviet literature will never be the same again.

II

It has been suggested that Sputnik is the only Soviet satellite which follows the prescribed line. It has also been said that the 'uneven development' in satellite countries makes the Party line less of a key-concept in analysing their internal evolution. There is some truth in this. The upheavals of 1956 showed that the *reaction* of different countries to the Party line differs in character and intensity. But the reconsolidation of Communist unity in 1957 also made clear the limits of variation. In all the 'People's democracies' we are witnessing the same consistent tendency to limit intellectual freedom, to tighten Party control over the arts, and to consolidate or reintroduce Party guidance throughout the field of culture in general. The intensity of this process is different, and so is the resistance of the intellectuals, which varies from country to country. But the *orientation* of the Party line is the same, whether in East Germany, under the veteran Stalinist Ulbricht, or in Poland under Gomulka, whose formula of the national road to socialism has been, so to say, doctrinally legalised. In Hungary, where the counter-revolutionary terror is rampant, and in Poland, where the revolt was partly successful, in China where the flowers are no longer blooming, and in Czechoslovakia where they were never given a chance to take root—everywhere the *literati* are on the defensive. That does not imply, of course, that they have everywhere similar opportunities for defence, or that the Party is everywhere equally successful in strengthening its cultural controls.

Poland is clearly at one end of the spectrum. The re-establishment of Party supervision is here still the mildest and resistance to it the strongest. The Party is still in bad shape, having lost its authority, organisational cohesion, and ideological *élan*. It is torn politically into various tendencies, which means that the present 'centrist' formula of the Party line, between 'revisionism' and 'dogmatism,' between terror and social-democratic reform, is subject to greater pressures than in any other satellite country. Nevertheless, the tendency became clear quite soon after the short 'liberal' period, and the writers and intellectuals provided a test case. The tightening of press censorship began in March, 1957. As all the cultural weeklies had 'revisionist' tendencies, a new magazine, *Polityka*, was established and became the semi-official organ of the Gomulkaist cultural policy. It began immediately to attack *Po Prostu*, the precursor of the 'spring in October,' whose first anniversary was marked by the closing of *Po Prostu*, castigated by the Party Secretariat for 'lack of faith in socialist construction' and for 'voicing bourgeois ideas.' The Party statement accused the paper of having 'descended to a position of barren negation and presented the political and economic realities of the country in a false light. . . . The office of press control had intervened in almost every issue of *Po Prostu*, forbidding the publication of the most harmful articles.' Nevertheless the paper had continued to publish many harmful items, causing 'social and political damage.' Soon after the closing down of *Po Prostu* came the suppression of the new literary monthly, *Europa*, intended to provide a forum of discussion and information about Western literary trends. The members of its editorial board, Andrzejewski, Jastrun, Herz, Zulawski, and Wazyk (the author of the 'Poem for Adults') resigned from the Party. So did Jan Kott, the literary critic who was known before October for his attacks on 'Socialist realism.'

The Party cultural spokesman, Professor A. Schaff, announced that although 'freedom of enquiry' is guaranteed, intellectual freedom is 'not identical with the liquidation of a definite

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cultural policy. . . . The absence of such a policy is not democracy and only leads to anarchy.' To deal with this, the Party is re-creating the permanent commissions of control for science, culture, and education, similar to the earlier departments supervising cultural activity which were abolished after October. The Stalinist ex-dictator of the Polish Writers' Union, who became the head of one commission, accused literary circles of having lost 'their Socialist principles already before October,' and of appealing to the 'moods, hopes, and aspirations of right-wing and reactionary forces, either indifferent or frankly hostile to socialism.' But the literary milieux are fighting back. At a recent congress of Polish writers the few literary 'politruks' were defeated and the presidium of the Union elected in 1956 without the discredited time-servers will continue in office. The mood of the disillusioned Polish writers is reflected in a new poem by Wazyk, who writes of those 'who came out of madness but are still insane' and muses sadly on 'Time which heals wounds and transform ideas into the instruments of. others.'

The relative mildness of Party pressure on the intellectuals in Poland is matched by the relative vigour of their resistance. With variations in intensity, this conflict between the Party and the intellectuals can be observed in the other East European countries.

In Czechoslovakia the Party press has been attacking cultural and artistic magazines for abandoning the Soviet type of literary criticism and for their critical attitude. *Nova Svoboda* (September 3, 1957) was particularly incensed by V. Javor's article, 'On the artist's freedom and work,' which appeared in the magazine *Cerveny Kvet:* 'Some individuals in our country have tried, like Lukacs in Hungary or Toeplitz and Kott in Poland, to distort Lenin's essay on Party organisation and Party literature. . . . In his interpretation of the Chinese "100 flowers" policy, V. Javor did not hesitate to oppose Party guidance in art and literature.' *Cerveny Kvet* has also come under strong criticism for showing itself 'incapable of producing a correct reply to the wrong opinions in these matters which are infiltrating from Poland, unable to find the courage to evaluate the treasonable part played by some Hungarian writers.' The Prague magazine *Kveten* was also severely censured, but its editorial board, unlike the writers on *Cerveny Kvet,* duly performed self-criticism.

The intellectual ferment in Bulgaria during the past year was quite marked. The outspoken writer and scientist, Emil Manov, made a daring attack on 'partiinost' in literature, and was supported by several other Bulgarian writers, some of them Party members, such as Stefan Daskalov, Todor Genov, and Luben Stanev.

In July, 1957, the Party literary organ, *Literaturen Front,* appealed for the restoration of 'unity of thought and unity of action,' a reorganisation of the leadership of the Writers' Union, and the restoration of discipline among writers and intellectuals who were 'rejecting the achievements of the Communist Party in the arts and literature and replacing them with cheap theories about the servility of art towards the régime.' Similar attacks were made in other Party literary magazines as well as in the Party daily. Manov was naturally singled out for criticism. He had written: 'Let us not forget that sometimes a man is more important than an institution. . . . Let us not separate the theory of our humanism from our actual practice.' He was severely taken to task by Todor Pavlov, member of the Party Central Committee and President of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, who had published a long attack on revisionism in the arts and literature in the Soviet *Literary Gazette.* Other writers are also under fire. Ludmil Stoyanov has been reprimanded by Pavlov for having written that 'it is better for the writer to fall one step behind the politics of the day than to occupy the false and unrealistic position of the writer of opportunist works.' Even a timid defence of jazz by the poet Rado Ralen has made him a target of attacks. The Party theoretician, Vulov, made clear the attitude of the régime towards the dissident intellectuals in *Rabotnicheskoe Delo* (November 21, 1957). 'In Bulgaria after the April Plenum the slogan of freedom of criticism became fashionable among certain circles of the petty-bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, but the Party reacted promptly against these unhealthy activities. . . . The slogan of freedom

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of criticism has always been the slogan of anti-Party elements, of opportunists, and enemies of socialism. . . . The Communist Party cannot allow complete freedom of views, discussion and criticism.'

In East Germany, after the liquidation of the Harich affair, the Ulbricht régime gradually increased pressure on the intellectuals, and the efforts to tighten Party controls were accompanied by a campaign of threats, warnings, and appeals to follow the Party line. As in Poland a new Party commission on cultural questions has been formed. It is headed by the veteran Communist writer Alfred Kurella, who replaced the old Comintern *apparatchik* Paul Wandel, released from his post as Central Committee secretary for cultural affairs. The line was laid down by Mattern at the recent Plenum of the Central Committee and a special cultural conference was convened in October to proclaim the better and tighter ideological discipline. It was addressed by the Deputy Minister for Culture, Alexander Abusch, who presented an eight-point programme for the new cultural policy. It demanded the strict implementation of *Parteilichkeit* and of 'socialist realism' in art and literature. It also promised to combat the 'equivocations and concessions to bourgeois ideals' spreading in the ranks of Party writers (Kantorowitz's defection was an example of this). Another speaker, Professor Hager, commended the closing down of *Po Prostu* and identified the 'demand for freedom of personality' with the 'white terror' in Hungary and the 'revisionism' of the Harich circle. Hans Rodenberg, formerly a German Communist emigré in the USSR (and an NKVD agent) summarised the position in a malicious speech: 'There is plenty of "Sturm und Drang" among our young writers, to be sure. But what direction are they storming in? What are they pressing for? The Party can tell them what is right and what is wrong. There can be no two views about that.' The young writers, whose sins date from summer 1956, include Heinz Kahlau, Jens Gerlach, Manfred Bieler, and Armin Müller. They had opposed cultural regimentation and been sharply called to task for it. Also among those condemned for not conforming to the Party line were the Marxist scholars, Professors Bloch and Meyer, the leading philosopher and literary historian at Leipzig University. *Neue Deutsche Literatur*, the organ of the East German Writers' Union, was criticised for ignoring works of a 'socialist-realist' character. Rodenberg wanted the Party 'to combat the idea that it owes some sort of a debt to the artists,' and Alfred Kurella emphasised that 'Party discipline is as binding upon artists as upon any other comrades.'

It is in Hungary that the cultural terror is at its peak. After the revolution many prominent writers refused to publish their work in the Hungarian press. After a 'temporary suspension' of the Writers' Union in January, 1957, as 'contrary to the interests of the Hungarian People's Republic,' and the arrest of a number of writers, the Union was disbanded altogether in April and replaced by a Literary Council appointed 'to assist the competent Government agencies in solving artistic problems.' Some of the most famous writers, Tibor Dery, Gyula Hay, Zoltan Zelk, and Tibor Tardos have been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for 'leadership in the organisation designed to overthrow the State order.' The most talented Hungarian poet, Gyula Illyes, entered a sanatorium for nervous diseases. Another poet, Istvan Eörsi, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for poems which he wrote and which circulated clandestinely. The list could be lengthened.

In these conditions the writers preferred to keep silent. *Elet es Irodalom* (Life and Literature), which replaced *Irodalmi Ujsag*, was boycotted not only by the writers but also by the general public, which named it 'Death and Denunciation.' While maintaining that 'the empty talk about the silence of Hungarian writers is a myth,' *Elet es Irodalom* admitted in August that 'a healthy literary life has not yet started.' It explained the situation as follows: 'Some writers have not yet learned to face reality, and refuse to take their place in literature, giving the impression that they are pushing the cart of counter-revolution. Then there are those who still refuse to admit their mistakes, to acknowledge the historic truth. They find it difficult to shake off the era of illusion and romanticism. All this creates confusion, increases rumours and the sense of insecurity. It

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is high time that this unhealthy situation came to an end.' In order to draw the reluctant writers into collaboration a new literary magazine, *Kortars,* was established, to provide a more 'liberal' platform. Its first issue, however, containing an open letter by six writers, was attacked for halfheartedness. Writing in *Elet es Irodalom* (September 27, 1957), Tamas Kis said that 'on reading the letter disappointment takes the place of interest. We cannot help feeling that the writers of the joint letter pass over events about which there should be a lot to say, as if they had never happened.'

At the moment the Party cultural line is influenced largely by Jozsef Revai, the ultra-Stalinist cultural dictator under Rakosi. His wrath is directed against writers and intellectuals whom he considers responsible for the October events. He tries to make up for the error of the 'soft' policy before October. In his view the real villain was not Rakosi or Gerö but Tibor Dery. Accordingly he pressed hard for the death sentence; Dery was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment. On the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the October revolution Revai published an article in *Elat es Irodalom* defending 'socialist realism' against its detractors who 'under the guise of the struggle against Zhdanovism are, in fact, trying to demolish Leninism.' He also attacks his old master, G. Lukacs, who has been allowed to return from Sinaia to Budapest, and who, like Pasternak, will soon have his book published in Italy. Together with Jozsef Szigeti, another pupil of Lukacs, he announced the publication of a study designed to destroy Lukacs. Whether Lukacs will be able to withstand the pressure or be re-arrested cannot be guessed in advance. In any case the wave of arrests among writers and intellectuals 'responsible for the counter-revolution' continues and a new series of trials is expected. *Elet es Irodalom* reproduced Alexander Abusch's report at the East German cultural conference in which Lukacs is accused of 'systematically slandering the Soviet Union and preparing, by advocating his "third-force" illusions, the counter-revolution.'

The situation of writers at the beginning of 1958 is, as always, a pointer to the general political situation. In 1956 they were everywhere in the forefront of *Sturm und Drang.* It was inevitable that with the receding revolutionary wave and the internal reconsolidation of the Soviet block they should become the first victims. The exigencies of single-party rule have their inexorable logic. From the most liberal to the most terroristic end of the spectrum, from the country of frustrated (if partly victorious) revolt to the country of revolution defeated by external intervention, writers are again everywhere under an intensified pressure to conform to the Party line. 'The closer link between literature and the life of the people, which was in fact established in 1956, is now used by Khrushchev as a euphemistic formula to re-establish greater Party control over the writers. With the exception of Poland, all the satellite countries are faithfully conforming. And the Poles, though reluctantly and in a different degree, are also falling into line.

But although the 1956 revolt of the intellectuals in the Soviet orbit was defeated, its spirit has not been exorcised. The fallen idols and desecrated taboos of the Communist faith have not been fully restored. All through 1957 fainter but still unmistakably non-conformist voices of writers and intellectuals could be heard. The spectre of *annus mirabilis* is still alive and seems to be saying: *Non omnis moriar.*

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEAD SOULS AND LIVING REPUTATIONS

Re-Assessing the Past of Soviet Literature

Gleb Struve

'To-DAY we can have a better and deeper understanding of our own history, full as it is of drama. Nothing must get lost in the history of Soviet literature either—not one name, not one work among those which thrilled us at the approaches to Socialism. . . . There is no need for us to impoverish ourselves and to give up this or that part of our literary legacy.' Thus V. Pertsov, a noted Soviet literary historian and critic, in his Introduction to the 1956 edition of Yury Olesha's *Selected Works*.[1] Yet this is precisely what Soviet literary critics and scholars have been assiduously doing for more than twenty years—impoverishing Soviet literature, depriving it of more and more names and works, trying to fit it into the Procrustean bed of 'partymindedness' (*partiinost*).

This process of elimination began in the mid-'thirties, became very intense during the latter part of that decade, best remembered for its ruthless purges of all opposition elements, and received a new momentum in the post-war Zhdanov era, with its campaigns against 'bourgeois formalists,' 'rootless cosmopolitans,' and so on. As a result, a number of writers disappeared both from Soviet literature and from its annals. (The same is true of some other fields of art, but not quite to the same extent as in literature. It is true also of some branches of scholarship.) Some of those writers were known to have been banished or liquidated during the purges, though in most cases it was not known whether they were or were not physically dead. This group included such well-known and influential writers as Boris Pilnyak and Isaac Babel, without whom Soviet literature of the 'twenties is unrecognisable; the critics Voronsky, Lezhnev, Gorbachev, Lelevich, and Averbach; the peasant poets Nikolay Klyuev, Sergey Klychkov, Petr Oreshin, and Pavel Vasiliev; the popular Communist playwright Vladimir Kirshon; the no-less-popular journalist and pamphleteer Mikhail Koltsov; the Polish Communist Bruno Jasienski; the pre-revolutionary poet Osip Mandelstam, who had never been able to adjust himself to the new order of things; the novelist Galina Serebryakova, author of a novel about the young Karl Marx, who in 1936 was listed as a Trotskyite agent; Ivan Kataev; and many others, including some prominent non-Russian Soviet writers, among whom a group of Jewish writers, liquidated during the Zhdanov era, was the most conspicuous. There were others who had either faded out of literature to make an inconspicuous come-back later (like Yury Olesha, who disappeared from the literary scene in 1938 and made his reappearance soon after the war, first with a few stories and then with some insignificant book reviews, but whose earlier achievements were now completely ignored), or were openly expelled from the literary domain as part of Zhdanov's post-war campaign against 'formalism' and 'cosmopolitanism' (to this group belong Anna Akhmatova and Mikhail Zoshchenko; both made an inconspicuous come-back in the early 'fifties when the witch-hunt launched by Zhdanov began to peter out). Finally, there were those who suffered a literary eclipse, either posthumously or during their lifetime: their books ceased to be published and their work was infrequently mentioned, and even then only highly critically. The dead included the poets Velemir Khlebnikov and Eduard Bagritsky (Khlebnikov, by the very nature of his work, did not and could not enjoy a wide popularity, but until 1940 he was highly

[1] Pertsov, author of a capital two-volume work on Mayakovsky, was himself once upon a time one of the 'left-wingers' in Soviet literature.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

appreciated in certain literary circles); the playwright Mikhail Bulgakov; the historical novelist and literary scholar Yury Tynyanov; and the popular twin satirists, Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov. Among the living authors the most conspicuous example in this category is Boris Pasternak, who throughout his literary career had been repeatedly attacked for his individualism and his 'un-Soviet' outlook, and in fact suffered more than one eclipse.[2]

A case apart among the outcasts from Soviet literature is that of Evgeny Zamyatin (1884-1937). The bulk of Zamyatin's work belongs to the Soviet period of Russian literature, and unless we attach to the concept 'Soviet literature' a restrictive ideological meaning, he is part of the Soviet literature of the 'twenties, when his influence on younger writers was very great. It was only in 1931, when Zamyatin emigrated to Paris, that he ceased to be a Soviet writer. Yet his name was virtually crossed out from the lists of Soviet writers, and in 1947 Professor L. Timofeev, in a letter to *Kultura i Zhizn* (No. 9, March, 1947) about my English book on Soviet literature, obviously had Zamyatin in mind when he wrote: 'Among Soviet writers [Struve] includes renegades and émigrés who have slandered the Revolution. . . .' A similar reproach was made by the Soviet critic Alexander Anikst in an article in *Soviet Literature* (1946, No. 9).

It was at the Second Congress of Soviet Writers in December, 1954, the year of the much advertised thaw, that the first timid signs of the coming reappraisal of the past of Soviet literature became apparent. The Congress was told of the forthcoming publication of selected articles and sketches by Mikhail Koltsov, who had been *Pravda's* correspondent during the Spanish Civil War and of whom nothing had been heard after 1937. A new edition of the satirical novels and stories by Ilf and Petrov, together with some previously unpublished pieces, was also announced.[3] In one of the most interesting and outspoken speeches at the Congress Veniamin Kaverin brought up the names of two other 'forgotten' writers when, painting his bold vision of literature of the future, he said: 'I see a literature in which the affixing of labels is regarded as a disgrace and is prosecuted as a common crime, a literature which remembers and cherishes its own past—remembers, for instance, what Yury Tynyanov did for our historical novel and Mikhail Bulgakov for our drama.'[4]

Such were the modest beginnings, made at the Second Congress of Soviet Writers, of a trend that was to acquire a real momentum only after the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party in February, 1956, and the so-called de-Stalinisation. Although the Writers' Congress did tone down some of the Zhdanov era formulations (this is particularly true of the changed attitude to the West and its culture, dictated undoubtedly by the new orientation of Soviet foreign policy), it did not fundamentally break away from Zhdanov's directives. Nor did it proceed to any systematic large-scale 'rehabilitation' of literary 'unpersons' (to use George Orwell's very apt coinage). Before we see how this was done after Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin, let us have a look at the first comprehensive survey of Soviet literature, the first part of which appeared at the time of the Writers' Congress and the second a year later.[5]

[2] Between 1932 and 1941 Pasternak was engaged principally in translations. Occasionally his poems and prose fragments found their way into the press, but not a single volume of poetry was published between 1932 and 1943. In 1943 and 1945 he published two slim volumes of poetry, but soon disappeared again from literature. In 1953 he published his translation of Goethe's *Faust*, which was received rather coolly. His own poetry began to appear again in Soviet periodicals in 1954. It may be added that some well-established and recognised Soviet writers also have their family skeletons—works that are no longer reprinted, *e.g.*, Leonov's *The Thief*, Kaverin's *Artist Unknown*, and *The Troublemaker*.

[3] Their principal satirical work—the novels *Twelve Chairs* and *The Little Golden Calf*—were reissued in 1948, but the publishing house was immediately taken to task for bringing out those two books: it was pointed out by *Literaturnaya Gazeta* that had the authors been alive they would never have consented to reissue those novels unrevised. The books were apparently withdrawn.

[4] Bulgakov fell into disfavour during the last years of his life (he died in 1940). Tynyanov ceased to be published during the Zhdanov era.

[5] *Ocherk istorii russkoy sovetskoy literatury*. Moscow, Part I, 1954; Part II, 1955. Part I was signed for the press on November 29, 1954; Part II on November 25, 1955 (that is, about three months before the Party Congress).

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This two-volume *Outline History of Soviet Russian Literature* was something of a literary event in itself. If we discount the short and tedious textbook of Soviet literature for high schools by Professor L. Timofeev, this was the first attempt since the late 'twenties to produce a more or less detailed and comprehensive account of developments in Soviet literature.[6] The need for such a retrospective survey had long been recognised, and at different times various projects were set on foot, but the task of carrying them out, in view of the continuous revisions of the party line on literature, was admittedly difficult, if not impossible. As it turned out, the work at last produced was to become obsolete and in parts invalid almost on the morrow of its publication, and there is already talk about the desirability of a new one. It is nevertheless worth examining at somewhat closer quarters, since it represents the officially approved estimate of the development of Soviet literature made between 1954 and 1956.

The book was published under the auspices of the Gorky Institute of World Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and was the product of collective labour. The editorial board of the first volume consisted of eight persons, several of them well known as historians of literature, but one misses the names of the best-known senior literary scholars. S. M. Petrov, who has been known as a specialist on the historical novel, was designated as the 'responsible editor' of the volume. Volume Two had seven editors: the name of Petrov had disappeared from the list, and there was no 'responsible editor' this time; but Petrov remained among the contributors to the volume. Volume One (covering the period 1918-1934) had ten contributors (four of them were also editors); in Volume Two (1935-1954) the number of contributors was increased to eighteen, of whom only three acted as editors. The only contributor of Volume One who did not take part in the compilation of its sequel was Mme A. A. Elistratova, who is better known for her work in English literature. The best-known contributors to both volumes were B. A. Byalik (a specialist on Gorky), K. L. Zelinsky (a former Constructivist and a well-known critic), V. A. Kovalevov (author of a monograph on Leonov), and L. I. Timofeev (author of the high-school textbook of Soviet literature and of various works on theory of literature, versification, etc.).

To anyone familiar with the historical development of Soviet literature the first notable fact about this *Outline History* is the complete absence from it of some important names. Thus, neither Pilnyak nor Babel gets a single mention, and this despite the fact that in Volume One particular stress is laid on the fight which Soviet literature had to carry on, in the 'twenties and early 'thirties, against all sorts of 'hostile' ideological currents which, as we read on p. 44, 'opposed an attitude of political neutralism, bourgeois individualism, and denial of the cultural heritage of the past to the creative principles of Soviet art.' Many literary groups of the 'twenties, such as Proletkult, the Serapion Brothers, LEF (Left Front), Pereval, the Constructivists, and RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers), are mentioned in a highly derogatory context. Similarly, many individual authors, who have now attained an established position in Soviet literature, are severely criticised for their ideological mistakes and deviations. They include Fedin, Kaverin, Leonov, Vsevolod Ivanov, Ehrenburg, Olga Forsh, and Selvinsky, as well as several who are no longer alive. There is no mention in the *Outline* of Khlebnikov, of Mandelstam, of Zabolotsky (except as a translator of Georgian poets), of Artem Vesely. Klyuev, Klychkov, and Oreshin are dismissed in one sentence as reactionary 'kulak bards' who idealised the patriarchal peasant way of life, while Pavel Vasiliev is not mentioned at all. There are three brief references to Pasternak in Volume One: on p. 199 it is pointed out that even Pasternak, a poet of intimate, narrowly personal lyricism, yielded at one point to the prevalent tendency to treat revolutionary themes in an epic manner when he wrote his poems '1905' and 'Lieutenant Schmidt'; on

[6] During the War there appeared a pamphlet by Alexey N. Tolstoy, entitled *Chetvert veka sovetskoy literatury* (A Quarter of a Century of Soviet Literature), Moscow, 1943. It was short and biased and obviously in the nature of a jubilee tribute (it was originally read as a report at the Jubilee Session of the Academy of Sciences on November 18, 1924). No 'unpersons' were mentioned in it.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

p. 244 his autobiographical prose work *Safe Conduct* is mentioned as one of those in which 'the idea of "freedom of artistic creation" in the spirit of bourgeois æstheticism was openly proclaimed'; on p. 350 his 'æstheticising poetry' and its 'enclosed little world of morbidly refined experiences' are once more opposed to the large world of popular struggle and socialist construction. In Volume Two (p. 86) credit is given to Pasternak for his masterful translations of Shakespeare and the Georgian poets. Not one of his volumes of lyrical poetry is mentioned, much less analysed. Olesha is allotted a few short paragraphs. His principal work—the novel *Envy*—is briefly discussed as a significant example of a whole group of works which 'carried on a polemic against socialism in the name of a falsely understood freedom of the individual' and in which 'the individualist survivals in the consciousness of man were poeticised and misrepresented' (pp. 247-49).

Considering that the *Outline* was presumably compiled after Stalin's death, and the second volume was completed not long before de-Stalinisation set in, it is surprising to see so many references to Stalin, though their frequency diminishes in Volume Two (Stalin's name is mentioned on thirty pages in the first volume and on fourteen pages in the second). There is not the slightest sign of any 'debunking' of Stalin in the *Outline*. On the contrary, he is often invoked as a literary authority, and his literary judgments on Demyan Bedny, on Mayakovsky, on Mikhail Bulgakov, and Seyfullina are repeatedly quoted. The formula of socialist realism is unequivocally attributed to him and the explanation of its meaning is backed by his words.[7] The scene in Pavlenko's novel *Happiness*, describing a conversation between Stalin and the hero of the novel in the gardens of Livadia—one of the most glaring examples of the cult of Stalin at its very height[8]—is cited as one of the most effective in the novel. Yet, a year later, in an article in *Novy Mir*, Konstantin Simonov was to suggest that this particular episode, which mars an otherwise good novel, could easily be eliminated from it. Finally, the *Outline* lends its almost unreserved approval to the Zhdanov directives of 1946-48 (ii, 214-16).

In the light of what happened shortly afterwards it became clear that the labours of half-a-dozen editors and a dozen contributors of the *Outline* were wasted. The moment for publishing a survey of Soviet literature based in the main on the approaches prevalent in the late 'thirties and in the immediate post-war period was chosen most inappropriately. Barely had this long-awaited survey been published when the need was felt for a new one. The debunking of Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party was followed by a wave of literary 'rehabilitations,' by some general attempts to reappraise the literature of the 'twenties, and even by some 'revisionist' attitudes towards socialist realism. In the course of 1956 the resurrection of literary 'unpersons' became widespread and systematic. *Ad hoc* commissions were set up by the Union of Soviet Writers to deal with the literary legacy of So-and-So. They were usually presided over by some distinguished writer. A number of names were added to those of Mikhail Koltsov and Ilf and Petrov, whose works were reissued as a result of a decision taken by the Second Congress of Soviet Writers. Here are the most important of

[7] Thus on p. 188 we read about the famous 1925 resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on literature: 'Finally, this party document, which summed up the literary processes of the period that had elapsed and fixed the prospects of the future development of imaginative literature, once more asserted the need for developing a new method of art which must correspond to the demands of the epoch. This method was the method of socialist realism as Stalin was to define it a few years later.' And on p. 298: 'In 1932 I. V. Stalin, in summing up the experience of Soviet art and literature, gave the well-known definition of the artistic method of Soviet literature as a method of socialist realism, and of the rôle of Soviet writers in the fight for Communism as that of "engineers of human minds."' The essence of socialist realism is defined in the *Outline* as 'fidelity to the truth of life,' and Stalin's advice to the writers: '*Pishite pravdu*' (write the truth) is quoted twice (pp. 18 and 298). Before long the whole concept of the genesis of socialist realism was to undergo, as we shall see, a radical change.

[8] For some details of that priceless scene see my *Soviet Russian Literature: 1917-1950*, p. 357.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them: Isaac Babel, Boris Pilnyak,[9] Artem Vesely, Pavel Vasiliev, Vladimir Kirshon, Ivan Kataev, Bruno Jasienski, and Sergey Budantsev. Babel's *Red Cavalry,* Jasienski's unfinished novel *The Conspiracy of the Indifferent,* a volume of Vasiliev's poetry, a volume of Kirshon's plays, and some stories by Ivan Kataev made their appearance in the course of the past year. In the case of Jasienski, Vasiliev, and Kirshon, as well as of Koltsov, it was admitted that they had been innocent victims of Stalin's purges in the late 'thirties. That Babel had died while deprived of his freedom was also admitted.[10] Nothing has so far been revealed about Pilnyak's personal fate, but it has long since been assumed that he was shot. In no case were the circumstances revealed under which these writers had met their end. No exact dates were given. A typical example of the way in which these matters were referred to is to be found in the Introduction to the 1957 volume of Kirshon's plays, in which the important rôle of Kirshon in the development of the Soviet drama is plainly brought out. Here we read (p. 16): 'Kirshon had many creative designs, and vast and bold plans; he had accumulated a rich store of observations and impressions. These plans were not carried out, these designs did not materialise. In 1937 Vladimir Kirshon was arrested on a slanderous denunciation, and a year later he was no more [*evo ne stalo*].' A similar shamefaced reticence with regard to the background of literary disappearances was shown by V. Pertsov in his interesting introduction to Yury Olesha's *Selected Works.* After referring to Olesha's *Envy* and other early works, Pertsov wrote: 'All this was done in the second half of the 'twenties, within approximately five or six years.[11] After that Olesha fell silent. Only occasionally does he remind us of himself by excellent prose "miniatures" of reminiscences and literary criticism. His thoughts are, as usual, sharp; his colours fresh. . . . Olesha works slowly. Yet the reader has the right to ask us: Why has there been no appraisal of all that he has done in the light of the whole experience of Soviet literature and against the background of the victorious history of the new society which is approaching its fortieth year?' This last question is purely rhetorical and remains unanswered. It is impossible, however, to believe that Olesha just 'fell silent' or that the complete silence about his past record between 1938 and 1956 was accidental.[12] Either Pertsov is being hypocritical or he has his tongue in his cheek.

In the course of 1956 some attempts were made to discuss the problem of reappraising Soviet literature in more general terms. They were rapidly discouraged, for they raised inevitably a number of awkward questions. Thus, in an article in *Novy Mir* (September, 1956), entitled 'Before the Map of Our Literature,' Mme S. Shtut bewailed the number of 'blank spaces' on the map of Soviet literature, representing ostracised authors and works, and pointed out that this was becoming a major literary-historical problem, 'for until this historical injustice is corrected the full truth about our literature cannot be told.' But the problem, according to Shtut, was not merely historical, it also had an acute topical interest. The 'blank spaces' were due to a number of causes of which the devastations wrought by the cult of the individual were only one. Shtut gave a long

[9] Pilnyak had to wait longest for his turn: the appointment of a commission to deal with his literary legacy was announced in March, 1957. The commission was to be presided over by the playwright Nikolay Pogodin. So far there has been no news of any reissues of Pilnyak's works.

[10] In his book of literary reminiscences the Yugoslav writer Gustav Krklec relates that when Konstantin Simonov visited Zagreb in 1946 he asked him about Babel whom he had known in France in the 'twenties. Simonov's reply was that Babel was in exile in Siberia but would soon be pardoned 'in recognition of his great talent' (G. Krklec, *Lica i krajolici,* Zagreb, 1954, p. 94).

[11] This is not quite accurate: Olesha continued to appear in print until 1938.

[12] Olesha was not even mentioned in Alexey Tolstoy's jubilee survey of 25 years of Soviet literature, although his *Envy* had been hailed, upon its publication, as one of its outstanding works, and now we read in Pertsov's Introduction: 'In Yury Olesha's *Envy* we were faced with one of the types in the history of the new society, in the fight between the new and the old. The picture of the revolutionary transformation of the world painted by Soviet literature would be incomplete without this book . . . *Envy* cannot be imagined outside Soviet prose fiction, outside the Soviet epoch which made its appearance possible.'

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

list of Soviet writers who had in one way or another dropped out of Soviet literature. It included those who had 'physically disappeared' (the recently resurrected Babel, Jasienski, and Koltsov were mentioned by name); those whose work was posthumously ostracised (Ilf and Petrov, Bagritsky); those, still alive, whose works were withdrawn from circulation (no names were given, but apparently Shtut had in mind Olesha, whose *Selected Works* had not yet been reissued; later in the article she spoke of him as one of the neglected great and original talents); and finally, those who were just overlooked by Soviet critics and scholars. Shtut charged her fellow-critics with a 'destructive craving for exposure' as a result of which all that did not conform with the theoretical ideal of the art of socialist realism was readily amputated from the living body of literature. She reproached Soviet critics and literary scholars for having neglected the historical tragedies of Selvinsky and having 'overlooked' Pasternak, 'although, knowing with Gorky "what a lot of good" there was in his poetry, it was our duty to ponder deeply the tragedy of his lyrical hero.' Whatever attitude one may have towards Pasternak, said Shtut, 'even his worst enemy would not describe him as a minor poet.'

Shtut's article was almost immediately attacked for its revisionist tendencies. Nevertheless, three months later the same magazine published another article, by A. Metchenko,[13] entitled 'Historicism and Dogma,' which developed the same theme. The article was in the main a defence of the objective historical approach to Soviet literature. Like Shtut, Metchenko was very critical of the present state of Soviet literary criticism and scholarship. Few of the 550 dissertations on Soviet literature published in the last ten years were of real value. For the most part they were merely inflated critical essays with long bibliographies, designed to popularise recently published works which had been awarded Stalin Prizes. Their authors duly received their degrees but they had no training in literary-historical research, no skill in textual criticism; they had never read any periodicals of the 1920s and 1930s, and had never consulted any archives. This was not entirely their fault, Metchenko admitted revealingly, for all students of the past of Soviet literature were greatly handicapped by the fact of so many books, journals, literary miscellanies, and newspapers, not to speak of archive materials, being 'locked under seven seals.' The implication was, of course, that historians of Soviet literature outside the Soviet Union were in some respects better off.

Like Shtut, Metchenko spoke of the need to restore to a number of writers not only their civil but also their literary rights. To the names already mentioned he added those of two early 'proletarian' poets, Vladimir Kirillov and Mikhail Gerasimov.[14] He was also the first, to my knowledge, to bring up the name of Pilnyak after a silence of nearly twenty years. Without defending Pilnyak as a writer, even treating him as an enemy, Metchenko suggested that the younger Soviet generation should know more about Pilnyak in order to be able to reply to his champions abroad. (Incidentally, one of the characteristic features of the writings of Soviet literary critics and scholars is their growing sensitivity to what is being said about Soviet literature abroad. This is in part due to the critical opinions on Soviet literature that have been lately voiced in Poland, Hungary [before the suppressed 1956 revolution], and Yugoslavia; but it is also one of the inevitable results of the increased cultural intercourse with the West.) Metchenko also proposed reappraising some literary organisations and groups which had existed in the early period of Soviet literature, such as Proletkult, The Smithy, the Serapion Brothers, LEF, and RAPP. In recent years they had been viewed too onesidedly, their positive features overlooked, and their defects over-

[13] Before the War Metchenko was known as a student of Mayakovsky. To a 1940 symposium on Mayakovsky he contributed an interesting paper on the poet's early phase.

[14] A detailed, and on the whole objective, examination of the whole Proletkult movement and its contribution to Soviet literature is the subject of the first instalment of Kornely Zelinsky's survey of early Soviet literature which began to appear in *Znamya* (October, 1957, pp. 180-209) under the title '*Na velikom rubezhe* (At the Great Divide).' The subsequent instalments were not available to me when I wrote the present article.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stressed. Metchenko recalled that Marxist critics of the 'twenties (he did not name them, but it should be pointed out that many of them were themselves later ostracised) knew how to discriminate between the writings of the Serapion Brothers and their theoretical views, while after the war their very name became a term of abuse. As for RAPP, far be it from him, Metchenko, to whitewash it, but the truth demanded that its positive contribution to Soviet literature be recognised alongside its sins, and in particular its share in paving the way for socialist realism: the latter, said Metchenko, 'was not an invention of Stalin, Zhdanov, and Gorky.' In general it was wrong to make Gorky an absolute criterion: 'Gorky's rôle in the 'twenties was enormous, but for many writers he was not such an unquestioned authority . . . as we commonly think. People learned from Gorky and argued with him. He was not always right. He, too, learned a great deal from the young Soviet literature.' In the Soviet Union today these statements, moderate as they may seem to us, sounded almost iconoclastic. Nor did Metchenko beat about the bush with regard to the nefarious influence of the cult of Stalin on Soviet literature and literary criticism. Unlike Shtut, he did not make use of the euphemistic formula 'cult of the individual' but referred to Stalin openly. The trouble with socialist realism was that, like everything else associated with Stalin (to whom its 'invention' was mistakenly attributed), it was 'made absolute,' converted into a set of rigid laws and hidebound dogmas, presented as an eternal truth. This was to the great detriment of Marxian æsthetics. 'We are now faced,' said Metchenko, 'with the task of revising and reappraising everything that bears the deadening stamp of the cult of the individual.'

In the same number of *Novy Mir* its editor, Konstantin Simonov, came out, in his 'Literary Notes,' with revelations about Stalin's direct interference with literature in the 'forties. Simonov was reprimanded for his indictment of Stalin, and this line of argument was subsequently discouraged by the partial rehabilitation of Stalin undertaken by Khrushchev. As for the revision of the past history of Soviet literature along the lines suggested by Shtut and Metchenko, it was continued, though somewhat more cautiously.[15] In the first place, it took the form of publications of the works of formerly ostracised authors. These volumes were provided with introductions in which the authors and their rôle in Soviet literature were reassessed. As a rule, no attempt was made to explain why this or that author had been banned for such a long time. One of the most interesting and candid of such introductions is Pertsov's to Olesha's *Selected Works,* from which some quotations have been given above. It is significant that Pertsov spoke openly—and without disparagement—of Western European influences on Olesha's style and manner—something that would have been impossible during the Zhdanov era. There were also some articles that continued Shtut's and Metchenko's line, one written by Professor L. Plotkin, who in the immediate post-war period had acted as one of Zhdanov's watchdogs.[16] Now he, too, lamented the impoverishment of Soviet literature through the 'artificial removal' of some writers and the neglect of others. Like Metchenko, he insisted on a more objective view of the literary groups of the 'twenties, for 'then, and then only, will the development of Soviet literature be grasped in all its vitality, in the clash of divergent principles.' In flat contradiction to his own attitude during the Zhdanov era, Plotkin also developed the by now more or less safe theme of the ties between Soviet literature and modern European and American literatures, and the influence of the latter on Soviet writers. He refused to believe now that 'the work of Romain Rolland and Anatole France, of Theodore Dreiser and Ernest Hemingway, of Thomas Mann and Karel Capek, has gone without leaving a trace in [Soviet] literature.' He even mentioned the popularity of John Dos Passos in the Soviet Union in the late 'twenties.

Kornely Zelinsky followed up the suggestions made by Metchenko and Plotkin and subjected

[15] I have not seen any direct attacks on Metchenko in the Soviet press. Although he went, in a way, farther than did Shtut, his article was hedged with all sorts of reservations and towards the end of it he made an attack on Polish critics of socialist realism.

[16] *Neva*, 1957, No. 2.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the whole of the Soviet literary scene between 1917 and 1920 to a fairly detached analysis, dwelling in particular detail on Proletkult, The Smithy, and other 'proletarian' literary groups.

By the end of 1957 the 'rehabilitation' movement seemed to have slackened. No further commissions were set up. The work of some of the commissions has so far not resulted in any publications. A number of writers remain 'unrehabilitated': Zamyatin, Klyuev, Klychkov, Khlebnikov, Mandelstam—to name the most important ones. At the same time revisionist tendencies were introduced into the renewed discussion about socialist realism, carried on in Soviet learned institutions and scholarly journals. This discussion was in part stimulated by the severe strictures on socialist realism voiced throughout 1956 by Polish writers and literary critics and scholars. On the other hand, it was tied up with a general discussion about realism in literature, preparatory to the International Congress of Slavic Philologists in Moscow next September, when the question of modern realism will be one of the main topics of discussion. These two facts have conditioned two novel features of this latest discussion on socialist realism: (1) its defensive, somewhat apologetic tone in the face of Polish accusations, which tended to portray the decline of Soviet literature since the mid-thirties as due to socialist realism; and (2) the readiness shown by some Soviet scholars to argue with the non-communist critics of socialist realism.[17] The whole of this discussion is, of course, closely linked with the problem of reappraising the past of Soviet literature, but it is too vast to be discussed within the scope of this essay and must be the subject of a separate article.

It is difficult to say how far the reappraisal of the past by Soviet critics and scholars will go. As things stand at present, there are certainly definite limits to it—those limits are set by the principle of *partiinost* (party-mindedness) which has become one of the immutable mainstays of Soviet literature: it was once more re-asserted by Khrushchev in his talks with writers and artists in the summer of 1957. Many of the rehabilitated writers were *personal* victims of the Stalin régime of terrorism; their literary death was not due to any anti-Soviet tone in their writings (in some cases it was probably due to the refusal to conform with what was demanded of them), and there seems to be no insuperable obstacle to their re-incorporation in Soviet literature now that as individuals they can no longer cause any mischief while their written works can be appropriately pruned and edited. This is certainly true of such people as Kirshon and Koltsov, but it is even true of Babel and Pilnyak (though it is very doubtful whether Pilnyak will ever be published in full under the present régime). One can imagine even some of the works of such 'kulak' poets as Klyuev and Klychkov, duly trimmed, being re-issued (some poems of another 'kulak' poet, Oreshin, have already made their appearance). The same is true of such an 'un-Soviet' poet as Mandelstam. The degree of *potential* subversiveness of each of these writers must be carefully weighed by Khrushchev & Co. It is clear, however, that from the posthumous rehabilitation of Babel and Pilnyak we are not entitled to postulate the re-establishment of the principle of artistic freedom in the Soviet Union. Witness the ban on Pasternak's novel *Dr. Zhivago,* though again it is possible to imagine that, to save their face before the outside world, Moscow Communists will withdraw their ban and allow the book to be published in the USSR, where they are always in a position to control its actual distribution. Those who have read Pasternak's novel in the original believe it to be, fundamentally, much more 'subversive'—in the profounder, spiritual sense—than Dudintsev's mediocre opus or any of the partial indictments of this or that aspect of Soviet society so far known. But the dangers involved in its open publication after some revision must be weighed against the risk of its clandestine dissemination in unexpurgated form. For the rest, in literature, as in every other field of Soviet activity, we must be prepared for the possibility of new zigzags, of an interplay of pressures and reliefs.

[17] This feature is particularly marked in some of the papers read during the discussion on realism organised by the Gorky Institute of World Literature, and printed in its new journal devoted to *Literaturwissenschaft—Voprosy Literatury* (Problems of Literature)—which made its somewhat belated appearance in the summer of 1957 (its publication was decided on at the time of the Writers' Congress in 1954).

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NODDY AND THE COMMISSAR

Soviet Children's Literature

Helen Rapp

IN 1948 the Soviet Ministry of Education published a scholarly work by A. P. Babushkina, entitled *The History of Russian Children's Literature*. This book is interesting because it emphasises the educational element of books for children in Russia from the times of the seventeenth-century *Entertaining ABCs* of Karion Istomin, through the ideas of the nineteenth century to the precepts laid down by Maxim Gorki after the Revolution. Babushkina gives the following definition of children's literature: 'It is a literature which performs through the medium of artistic images the task of educating children. . . . A clear idea, a bright, gay or dramatic plot, clear composition, a hero as an ideal to be emulated . . . the serious use of the word . . . those are the necessary elements of the artistic organism of the works for children.'

Such principles, surely, are at the basis of serious books for children anywhere, and it is not surprising therefore that much of today's Soviet writing for children, if translated into English, would easily gain parental approval and be read by English children with pleasure. Some might even give great delight and gain much popularity. Children in Russia and England are, after all, mainly just children and the things they like to read are much the same. Nevertheless there are striking and quite fundamental differences between English and Soviet books for children, not the least being that in Russia children's books are published by the State, on a systematic and planned basis, whereas in the West they sprout in publishers' lists in a free, ungoverned and incalculable way. This very marked element of planning in the production of Soviet children's literature makes it possible, far more than it would be in the West, to generalise from a few examples chosen almost at random—and were it not so, the subject would be quite unmanageable, for the most striking thing about Soviet children's literature is its sudden and prolific growth.

Before the Revolution there was no regular publication of children's books—they cropped up from time to time, and, as in England, many books initially intended for adults were used as children's reading matter (Aksakov's *Childhood of Bagrov's Grandson* or Tolstoy's *Childhood*). Some of Russia's great writers tried to fill the gap, but at the end of the nineteenth century Chekhov still found reason to complain: 'There are no books for children. There are books about cats and dogs (a deliberate hint at his own story about a stray dog Kashtanka) —that's not children's literature: it's dogs' literature.'

Shortly before and after the Revolution Maxim Gorki and Kornei Chukovsky made a first attempt to tackle the subject systematically. Chukovsky wrote several interesting articles on children's language, stressing their creative approach to words, and produced some wholly delightful verses for children in the spirit and rhythm of language which he was advocating. Gorki, who still dominates the Russian literary scene, formulated guiding principles which, to some extent, foreshadowed the books that were to follow. Children, he proclaimed, should be brought up to be life's masters, not its slaves. Real life was the best teacher. Children, in Gorki's words, 'have a love for the unusual and colourful. The unusual and colourful in the Soviet Union are all those new things which the revolutionary energy of the working class is achieving.' He called, for instance, for a book about how man became a giant, about how science increased human sight (telescope, television), hearing (telephone, wireless), legs (transport), hands (remote control), etc. These achievements of man were to be presented entertain-

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ingly, without moralising and above all in beautiful and simple language.

One can trace these precepts of Gorki's in the books Soviet children read today. The first thing that strikes the Western parent is what they do *not* read. They have no comics, no Wild West tales, no detective stories, no romances glorifying violence. I do not wish to pronounce any judgments, but I have the impression that—whatever else they may do—Soviet children in their day-dreams do not rush around waving six-shooters or fighting battles against gangsters. Altogether—except for the traditional Russian fairytales which are a thing apart—the fantastic, for better or worse, is absent. The unusual and colourful are provided by the more eventful moments of Russian history (the Crimean war, the revolutionary period, or the last war) or in the romantic setting of some of the far-flung and little known regions of the Soviet Union (Siberia, the Altai mountains) or in adventure stories where childish credulity is not strained beyond, say, the possibility of an outsize submarine linked with the shore by an underwater tunnel. There is a whole class of books, published as 'A Library of Adventure,' which presents adventure in the form of exciting historical, ethnographical or scientific instruction, but which, stripped of their narrative, would not disgrace a text-book. The approach to children's literature in the Soviet Union is serious, even earnest, and as the books are published not by individual and unco-ordinated firms but by the state, there is a certain amount of uniformity and a great deal of system in the aims of the books issued.

As in the West, they are roughly divided into three groups suitable for three different age levels, but in Russia each book clearly states the age group for which it is intended.

The greatest variety is found among the books for teenagers where you have adventure tales, straightforward stories of children's everyday life at home and at school, historical novels, and purely scientific books such as a story of experiments with plants in a botanical garden outside Leningrad, to produce bigger, better, and juicier berries. This age-group also comes in for the greatest amount of teaching, by which I mean the whole range from general moral and character-forming instruction to the repetitive drumbeats of Communist and patriotic propaganda. Children's literature, where it does not seek merely to amuse or thrill, is necessarily educational. Propaganda apart—and Soviet children get their propaganda in magazines more than in books—it is interesting to get a glimpse of what is good or bad in the eyes of Soviet pedagogues.

The virtues extolled are on the Spartan side: self-discipline, honesty towards oneself and others, simplicity, the importance of being natural, comradeship and, overshadowing all others, the dominant virtue of perseverance, hard work, and collective rather than individual effort. If there is one theme which Soviet children's books stress a little more than any other, it is that of the need to face and master difficulties, of doing things the hard way. Prilezhaeva's book *The Youth of Masha Strogova*—a book for teenage girls—urges naturalness, simplicity and perseverance. Oseyeva's very popular *Vasyok Trubachov and His Friends*—for slightly younger children—speaks for comradeship, discipline, the importance of school education and—perseverance. Its underlying pedagogic purpose comes through openly enough in the postscript to the young readers which says: 'You have read the last page. Together with Trubachov and his friends you have lived through everything that came their way. You love your country as much as they did and if danger comes, you will be ready to defend her from her enemies, to preserve your school, your happy childhood. . . . In your school life, like Trubachov and his friends, you have many great and many little things to do, you educate yourself and steel your will in order to join the ranks of better children. . . .'

It is perhaps not entirely my fault if all this tends to seem just a little on the drab side, although I should add that all the books I have mentioned present their stories entertainingly and probably have no difficulty in holding the attention of their young readers. But rather more colour is brought into the young Russian's reading matter by the historical novels. It may be worth noting in passing that those I have read make no attempt to distort or misrepresent the past to suit any present Soviet purpose. The political approach to books for young

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

children is quite different from that to books for the older ones. Changes in the party line are not reflected in them to anything like the same extent. In line with a tradition of writing of which Tolstoy was the outstanding example in Russia, it is the people rather than the isolated statesman or leader who are the protagonists in Soviet historical novels for children. Their aim is to make history lessons more palatable and with a sensitive and intuitive touch characteristic of some Russian writing they achieve this by viewing history through the eyes of a small child. There is one about the Crimean war by Grigor'yev which describes the defence of Sebastopol as seen by a sailor's small son who takes an active part in everything that goes on. He meets personally the great admiral Nakhimov and witnesses the admiral's death. And *The Lone White Sail,* a famous historical novel by Valentin Kataev, is also a profound study of a child's psychology. It deals with children caught up by the revolution, caught in it and bewildered and making sense of it all in their own childish way. 'Daddy,' says one little boy, 'what is Tsar?' 'How do you mean: what is Tsar?'—'Well, *what* is it?'—'A Tsar is a Tsar.'—'No, but what *is* it?'—'I don't know what you mean. He is the anointed, if you like.'—'Anointed with what . . .?' Little snatches of conversation which children overhear from the grown-ups, together with their elders' nervousness, fear or indignation which the child senses, are understood in a peculiar child perspective. Out of chaos the child creates a world which has no bearing on reality but which, to him, is very vivid.

This way of presenting the world from inside a child's mind is a peculiar achievement of Russian literature from the time of Aksakov's *Family Chronicle* and Tolstoy's *Childhood.* It is a tradition that is being kept alive, but is now presented about children *for* children, whereas in the last century its appeal was to the adult.

The same understanding for what is unsophisticated, natural and alive comes out in the books about plants and animals. Some of them, in the wealth and beauty of their language, and in their refreshingly unsentimental approach, remind one of Williamson's *Tarka the Otter.* Armilov's book *In The Hunter's Tracks* gives short accounts of the various birds and animals he hunted with his grandfather. There is no false sentimentality about killing: the description of a bear's death is stark in its realism, stark as the Siberian forests where man must kill to survive. But one is at the same time left aware of the educational aim of instructing the child and of enriching his vocabulary.

Soviet books for children thus preach the virtues of friendship, courage, education and perseverance, entertain with plausible adventures and provide information about nature and human scientific achievement. With regard to the latter, a brief summary of recent publications would show the range. There are books like B. Lyapunov's *Struggle For Speed* (1956) which is an easily worded handbook on the achievements of technology. It discusses above all the latest discoveries in aviation, automation, electronics and all those branches of science that go into the making of them and poses at the end the following question: Is all this super science-fiction? Does this mean that the machine will replace man? No. Man the controller remains. Nothing can replace the human brain. And Lyapunov quotes the words of Gorki: 'We live in an age when the distance between the most unbelievable fantasies and reality is being reduced with incredible speed.' This book looks ahead to future achievements, to the time when man will take more from the earth and the sun than they at the moment yield. The purpose of the book, clearly, is not only to instruct young readers, but also to kindle their imagination and to draw them into the ranks of scientists and technologists. The same can be said of A. E. Fersman's *Attractive Geochemistry* (1954), a long, well written, comprehensible work on the study of the atom which ends with the words: 'We must study nature in order to conquer it. We must master the atoms so that we can do with them whatever we want, we must, for instance, find super-hard alloys, which will be harder than diamonds . . . we want to subjugate the atom, to bend it to our will, to the will of triumphant man who turns all the threatening and harmful forces of nature into useful ones. The whole of nature we want to put at the feet of hard-working humanity. . . . With these words we end this book. . . . But, dear friends, is there an end to science or to

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

study?' Or again there is M. Vasil'yev's *Journey Into Cosmos* (1955), which in this Sputnik age I personally found fascinating. It deals with the possible victory of man over cosmic space. 'From a nebulous dream this problem has become a concrete task of science and technology. It is no longer science-fiction writers who work out the details of cosmic routes, but scientists and engineers. Metallurgists are already testing those metals, whose job it will be to visit other planets . . . the first pilots of the first cosmic ships have already finished their secondary education. . . .' The author considers Professor V. V. Dobronravov's prediction that men will visit the moon by the year 2000 to be a somewhat pessimistic one. Vasil'yev—in his own words—writes about how 'man came to the fulfilment of such a dream, about the history of the discovery first of one planet—man's own earth, and about the future discovery of the Universe, outlining the difficulties which man has overcome and those which still stand in his way to the stars.' Discussing aeronautics as opposed to aviation, Vasil'yev must necessarily touch upon different branches of science, engineering, technology, etc., all of which he does lucidly and entertainingly, and makes his book more thrilling than any science fiction. And once more the purpose and the message is explicit and clear. His young reader is made to feel proud of the achievements of man, proud to belong to the human race which, having pitted itself against dark and mysterious forces of nature, is beginning to emerge victorious. Science, he is told, is a constructive and a hopeful thing, it is there for the benefit of humanity. Its destructive powers are not discussed, they are not even mentioned. The reader is urged to participate in or to admire its achievements. (Although the achievements of Soviet scientists are stressed again and again, tribute is paid to what has been and is being done abroad.)

Sometimes Soviet science books may appear to a Western reader excessively dry in their earnest informativeness: as in a story about gooseberries and how to grow them and how to improve them by grafting and how to classify the various types of gooseberries and how to test suitable soils and so on.

By and large, the virtues of collective effort, courage, optimistic faith in the achievements of the human mind are normally the total extent of 'indoctrination' in Soviet books for children, with one startling exception that came my way. A book was published in 1951 under the title *The Story of the Miraculous Dandelion.* It is written in collaboration with an agricultural scientist and tells of the discovery of a rubber plant in the Soviet Union. But with the tale of the discovery, investigation, and cultivation of this miraculous weed there is also woven into the book a history—if history it can be called—of rubber in the capitalist world which is the crudest anti-Western propaganda I have come across. Germany, the arch-enemy, and America, the potential enemy, are uncommonly interested in getting hold of this weed, and some foreign scientist even tries to steal the seeds at an agricultural exhibition. The book is such a jumble of botanical information, defence of Lysenko theories, and anti-capitalist propaganda as to stand out sharply from the general run of children's books. It is a bad book also from the point of view of mere presentation, for no child can absorb so much different and diverse information even if the information were correct.

I have saved up for the end the pleasure of looking at the books Soviet Russia produces for her youngest readers. The books for older children are marked by a certain uniformity and a certain amount of implicit political teaching—it is a good child's ultimate aim to be accepted into the *komsomol.* Their style and language are usually simple and on occasions pedestrian.

The nursery of Soviet literature presents a different picture. One is tempted to think that where politics do not have to enter, the writer is glad to be able to let himself go, in imagination, in language, in illustration.

There is a veritable fairground of fun, of colour, rhythm, and humour. There is more imaginative grasp of a child's young eagerness and far less whimsicality than our children are sometimes exposed to and none of that facile foreshortening, that false child's perspective which is really designed with an eye on the delighted adult. Where the older children read mainly prose, the small children have much

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of their reading in verse. This is naturally of uneven quality but sometimes reaches flashes of genius, as in some of the poems of Marshak, of Barto, and in those of Chukovsky, that master of Russian jingle and rhyme. The poems, intended to teach children their native language, have marked rhythm and very clear rhymes, and there is great play on words, puns being a great favourite with children. Marshak has a delightful little poem about a garden, a garden which wakes up in the morning, washes, goes for a walk, has lunch, sleeps, plays with toys . . . and is of course a Kinder-Garten. These verses for children are about the seasons of the year, about different regions of the Soviet Union, about the various fruits that grow in different climates, about animals, and about toys. The animals, incidentally, rarely behave like human beings, as for instance in Grahame's *The Wind In The Willows*. If they are made to talk, it is usually to show up their own characteristics, much as in fables. And there seem to be no animated toys, in the manner of, say, Enid Blyton. Russian toys do not make off on their own to take a trip to the seaside or in other ways try to parallel human life. They remain starting points for the childish imagination: The boy beats his drum and *sees himself* on a parade-ground, he strides his rocking-horse on *imaginary* excursions. Ultimately, it is what the child does with the toys that goes into Russian children's books, not what the toys do on their own. No confusion is created about the world surrounding the child, his toy cupboard is not full of pathetic fallacies.

These books for the small children also stand out by being printed more legibly and on better paper than the average Soviet product and there is colour and originality in the illustrations. This applies also to the traditional fairy tales which are republished periodically with colourful pictures in the old Russian style and of which admirable children's films have been made. But there is something in the very presentation and approach of a fairy tale which prevents all these witches, hunchback horses, and underwater princesses from getting mixed up in the child's mind with his everyday world, a careful though not derogatory setting apart of this world of magic in which the retention of the traditional stylised illustrations plays no small part. The draughtsmanship of Soviet book illustrations is often of a very high order. In children's books it is supported by strong and imaginative colours, a free and powerful use of, say, dark greens and reds or purple, a readiness to exploit the darker, deeper, even gloomier end of the palette which seems very alive, seizes the child's visual imagination in no uncertain manner and appeared to me very welcome after the faint and sweetish pastel shades feebly decorating some Western publications for children.

The Detgiz—or Publishing House for Children—provides its reading public also with a wide range of monthly periodicals. In many of these political propaganda is far more marked than in the books—I have some issues where nearly the first half of each paper is devoted to poems and songs in praise of Stalin, the Soviet Union, various youth movements, and the international peace campaign. But apart from this the periodicals, like the books, cater for different age groups and for a great diversity of interests. There are geographical and technical magazines and others which encourage music, singing, dancing, and hobbies like woodwork. Much attention is devoted to using these magazines to stimulate interest in schoolwork, in the experimental side of science, in overcoming a child's aversion to mathematics by showing its practical applications. These papers, which are printed in large numbers, suffer from a somewhat uninspiring appearance—faded small print on yellowish paper—with the exception again of the magazine for the small children called *Murzhilka*.

I would like to end by quoting from a poem for children by Chukovsky, translated by Mr. Richard Coe, of Leeds University. Chukovsky, who was already a well-known critic at the time of the Revolution, is not altogether typical of today's Soviet literature for children, but is still very popular.

'The Knight of the Bath' is a poem about a boy who did not want to wash:

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The eiderdown fled
From my bed
And the sheet
From my feet,
And the pillow-slip
Sped
Hop-a-skip
From my head;
And the light
Took fright
And nipped
Into a drawer:
And my books and my toys
In a trice
With a pattering noise
Like mice
Hurried
And scurried
And slid
All over the floor
And hid!

I wanted a drink,
And what do you think?
The coffee pot
Shot
Straight into the sink!
What's the matter?
Skitter-scatter
Every plate
And every platter
Whirling,
Twirling,
Swirls around
In the air
And on the ground!
A watering can
And a steak
Play catch-as-catch can
With a cake;
And the cake
With a trowel,
And the trowel
With a towel,
And the towel
With a bowl
(A big bright bowl)
And a rake!

With a crash like a big brass drum
Which shook every nail in the floor,
The Bath Tub strode through the door
Bad-tempered and scowling and glum!

'O, dirty-face, you slimy
Gutter-snipey little hog!
Chimney sweeps are not so grimy
Sweeping chimneys in a fog!
Look!
There's mud on your nose,
And there's ink on your toes,
And your hands are so filthy,
That even your shoes,
Your shoes and your trousers,
Your trousers, your trousers,
Your very own trousers,
Ashamed and forlorn,
Have hidden themselves,
And refuse to be worn! . . .

'I am the Tub
The Great Lord of the Water!
My name is King Scrub
And the Soap is my daughter.
One tap of my foot
And down will come howling:—
"Into the wash with him,
Into the Wash!"—
A mountain of soap,
And a mile of towelling,
Floods of suds,
And the Great Scrubbing Brush,
And the sponges and flannels
Like hounds from their kennels,
Will snap at your heels
And nip at each limb,
And you'll see how it feels,
You dirty young snorter,
To be washed in each quarter,
With water, with water
With icy cold water
And pumice
And vim!'

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the Light of the Silvery Sputnik

NOTES ON SOVIET SCIENCE FICTION

I—Past and Present

Walter Z. Laqueur

1957 has been the best year so far for Soviet science fiction, and the reasons are not difficult to divine. It may also have been the last year of old-fashioned science fiction, for the writers have been talking for some time now more and more like physicists, while the physicists have poached on what was until very recently the preserve of Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and the less well-known German Kurt Lasswitz. Books recently published in Moscow, such as Sternfeld's *Interplanetary Flights,* Vassilev's *Journey into the Cosmos,* or Gilsin's *Travel to Faraway Worlds,* contain a wealth of technical detail, but in contrast to earlier science fiction there is little in them on politics, while the love-angle has been discarded altogether. In most cases the borderline between fact, or potential fact, and fiction has been reached, and a new literary genre is slowly emerging.

Science fiction, the stepchild of the literary historian, has had for many years a unique place in Soviet literature; the critics never took much notice, but the readers did. These books were printed in enormous quantities, and even so there were not enough to satisfy an apparently inexhaustible demand. To give just one illustration, the most recent three-volume edition of H. G. Wells' stories (there have been very many editions) was put out in an issue of 225,000 copies. The reasons for the great attraction that science fiction holds for the Soviet reader are many and complex, but two are outstanding. The first is the great fascination that adventure stories have for human beings anywhere, without distinction of race, creed, or age. This genre was severely restricted in Soviet Russia for many years. There were no thrillers and no whodunnits, with the exception of an occasional half-hearted attempt in recent years to glorify or humanise certain aspects of the work of the Soviet police. A few spy stories did make their appearance, but they were badly constructed and badly written, and failed to attract attention. Science fiction thus had practically no rivals in the wider field of the adventure story. There was a second reason for its success that scarcely needs elaboration: Soviet society, the living conditions and prospects of the average citizen, stimulated a widespread escapism, and generated the desire to get away from it all, at least for a few hours, and the psychological urge to spend them in other, more exciting, worlds.

Soviet science fiction, like science fiction everywhere, goes back to Jules Verne and H. G. Wells; Soviet authors have gratefully acknowledged their debt to these two great masters of the genre. Verne, in particular, has been more widely read and celebrated in the Soviet Union—not only as a children's writer—than in any other country, including his own. Wells as a creative artist is more highly appreciated than Verne, but he is criticised for the 'absence of positive heroes' in his stories, such as Verne provided in abundance (Captain Nemo, the fighter for Indian independence, Captain Grant, *et al.*). Wells is also taken to task for his 'reformist politics' by Kyrill Andreyev in his long introduction to the latest Soviet edition of his works. On the whole, however, he is warmly recommended, and his influence is indeed palpable in much recent Soviet writing.

There are in addition several specifically Russian sources for contemporary Soviet science fiction. The outstanding ones in this context are Tsiolkovski, Alexei Tolstoi, and A. Grin. Of these A. Grin (his real name was Alexander Grinevich—the Polish element in Russian science fiction has always been strongly marked) was the least scientifically minded: He never dealt with other planets, only with imaginary, far away, exotic countries with strange Spanish-Italian names. But in this he set a fashion that

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was greatly admired both during his lifetime (he died in 1932) and more recently. The story of Grin's life reads very much like Gorki's; he was for many years a down-and-out, wandering through Russia; with the single exception of a trip on a steamer from Odessa to Alexandria and back, he never left his native country, for all the distant lands he described so beautifully. The Soviet authorities did not regard his work with great favour, both because he had been a member of the Social-Revolutionary party for many years, and because he withdrew so uncompromisingly from the real world around him which (they argued) contained so much more interesting material than fantasy could possibly provide. He was regarded as an impractical but harmless dreamer and left very much alone. Twenty years after his death Grin came in for considerable trouble; his work was condemned (in the wake of the Zhdanov purge) as the 'outpourings of a rootless cosmopolitan.' (His heroes carry names such as Sandy Pruell, Tyrhe Davenant, Durouc, Molli Varen, Van Conet, Stomador, Vincent Juarez, Laura Muldway, Galleran; the ships are called 'Consuelo,' 'Melusina,' 'Espaniola'—Russian names do not appear.) More recently, however, Grin has been rehabilitated and two of his novels (*The Golden Chain* and *The Road to Nowhere*) have been published in Leningrad with a benevolent introductory appraisal of the 'great magician A. Grin.'

Alexei Nikolaevich Tolstoi (1883-1945) is now generally recognised as one of Russia's greatest writers of the twentieth century, but not precisely as exemplary in his life. More than any other Soviet writer he contributed to Stalin's glorification, and this part of his work has come in for criticism in Russia too in recent years. Tolstoi wrote three 'fantastic romances' in the early 'twenties that have strongly influenced Soviet science fiction ever since. *The Hyperboloid of Engineer Garin* (translated into English as *The Death Box*) describes the attempt of the inventor of an apparatus spraying death rays to impose his totalitarian order upon mankind. The White Russian colony in Paris, fascism, love, the abortive revolution of the managers, everything comes in, but in the end the good men led by the Communist Shelga prevail. (Much of the politics was added by Tolstoi only in the rewritten version of his novel, published in 1937.) The topic of *The League of Five* is startlingly similar; some prominent monopoly capitalists and super-imperialists want to dominate the world through an attempt to bomb and split the moon. This attempt, too, is frustrated by the vigilance of the popular masses and their leaders.

Tolstoi's best effort at science fiction was his first story in this genre, *Aelita* (1922). This is the story of a Soviet expedition to Mars, scheduled to start a revolution on that planet. The internationalism of Gusev, one of the leaders of the expedition, is, however, poorly developed, and he contemplates instead annexing Mars to Russia as another Soviet republic. In addition we have the love affair between Los, another expedition leader, and Aelita, the beautiful Martian woman, and a great many other subsidiary themes such as the clash of various loyalties and duties.

Konstantin Eduardovich Tsiolkovski (born in 1857) was not, strictly speaking, a science fiction writer. A rural schoolmaster in Central Russia, he was at the same time a self-taught physicist of considerable distinction and fertile imagination. He anticipated in his work jet propulsion, the 'sputnik,' and interplanetary travel. His research was ridiculed or ignored during his lifetime; scarcely anybody paid attention to what is now regarded as his *magnum opus, Investigation of the cosmos by means of jet-propelled appliances* (1903-11). Only towards the end of his life did Tsiolkovski receive some recognition; in the year of his death (1935) the first experiments with missiles were carried out under his guidance. In order to propagate his ideas Tsiolkovski wrote some semi-fictional accounts of future interplanetary travel. One of his *obiter dicta* has now become quite famous in the Soviet Union and is quoted over and over again. 'Mankind will not always remain on earth—it will conquer the other planets.' Soviet authors believe that Tsiolkovski's chief merit was to have realised that men would never be able to reach the moon (let alone other planets) by any of the traditional means of transportation known around 1890 (balloon), or by a super-shell fired by a very powerful gun (as Jules Verne

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had suggested). Instead he drew attention to the potentialities of jet-powered ballistic missiles, which theoretically anticipated the technical development of fifty years—no mean feat in the twentieth century. In 1910 he thought that travel to Mars was still several hundred years ahead; by 1933 he was convinced that his old dream would be realised in the not-too-distant future.

Tsiolkovski's ideas have been taken further in the writings of A. A. Sternfeld (a science fiction writer), Y. S. Khlebtsevich (an engineer) and Professor K. P. Staniukovich. Khlebtsevich predicts that by the end of the twentieth century, travel to the moon will have become a commonplace affair. Staniukovich has developed the theory of a photon missile moving with the speed of light towards the outer planets; he believes, however, that this project will be tackled and executed only in the twenty-second century.

Recent science fiction is more and more in the tradition of Tsiolkovski; the early romantic-exotic elements are being progressively discarded and the general tone is very matter-of-fact. There would appear to be no limit to fantasy and inventiveness in this field; and yet there are usually only two different plots in the works of the Soviet science fiction writers: The flight to the moon, or another planet, and the detailed description of the obstacles which our astro-navigators have to overcome. Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451,* which was recently published in Russia, attracted much attention because it presented a totally different kind of science fiction; the editor in his introduction said that Soviet readers would like it because Bradbury was an angry and highly critical young American, and because Clarissa was a 'positive hero.' Another, somewhat unusual, plot is contained in I. Efremov's *The Star Ships,* describing their arrival from another planet 70 million years ago, before there was any life on earth.

But this is exceptional. We find the more common type of plot in Stanislav Lem's *The Astronauts,* published in the summer of 1957 by *Molodaya Gvardia,* the Komsomol publishing house. Lem is a Pole, and his novel was originally published in his native country where, in contrast to Russia, it did not cause a great stir. Lem relates the story of the trip of the space-ship 'Cosmocrator' to Venus in the year 2006 (after the victory of Communism on earth, needless to mention). 'Cosmocrator' was originally destined to land on Mars, but for a variety of reasons its course was changed. The story really begins in the year 1921, when a young Soviet geo-physicist, Kulik, began to suspect that the meteorite which had crashed thirteen years before in Siberia had really been a space-ship from another planet. There is not much politics in Lem's story: The pilot of 'Cosmocrator' is one Robert Smith, the grandson of an American Negro Communist who emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1948. Among the outstanding members of the crew there is an Indian and a Chinese; otherwise, his story gets far less involved in secondary, extraneous psychological and political plots than Alexei Tolstoi's thirty-five years earlier. The surprise element in the story is the realisation that the strange planet was once inhabited by human beings of sorts, who had attained a high degree of technical knowledge and mastery. They had in effect built space-ships of their own; but something had gone wrong at the last moment, they started fighting each other, and in the end all life on that planet was destroyed.

Typical of the more fantastic type of novel is G. Martinov's *The Planetary Guest* (published in the literary magazine *Yunost,* Sept.-Oct., 1957). This is the story of the journey of a space-ship from Callistho (the fourth satellite of Sirius) to the (our) sun, and on to earth, where it crashes. The ship travels at the fairly high speed of 278,000 km. per second, and yet it is eleven years on its way. A Soviet scientist (appropriately named Stern) explains the great technical progress achieved by the new arrivals from Sirius: 'Science and class structure on that planet were similar to that on earth in the past. The presence of classes and the subjugation of science to class interests hampered the development of science. But the people of Callistho changed their social system, established the conditions for creative action in which the broad masses could fully engage in scientific work. And now we see the results of the liberation of thought from class fetters.' 'Do you mean that there is full Communism on Callistho?' one of the foreign guests asks ironically. And Stern answers: 'Most certainly. . . .' Which strongly

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reminds one of the sixteenth-century discussions about the plurality of the world—what would happen to the people in other worlds—were they Christians, and so on.

There is a completely superfluous secondary plot: The attempted assassination of a Chinese journalist by an American secret agent on the Trans-Siberian express—of all places. Before that the Chinese has identified himself as a dialectical materialist, and the American as an agnostic and fideist—*pace* Mach and Avenarius. In the end the Callistho space-ship takes off on its return journey, having received a triumphal welcome everywhere. Two former inhabitants of our planet accompany them on their flight.

A. A. Sternfeld leaves even less to fantasy in his *Interplanetary Flights,* a little book published under the auspices of the State publishing house of theoretical-technical literature. He starts out with Daedalus and Icarus, the Indian epic 'Ramayana,' and early Chinese legends (according to which some Chinese had already been to the moon), and leads us beyond the sputnik, though his book was published several months before the first satellite was launched. Sternfeld presents a great many figures and diagrams; he points out, for instance, that the sputnik will be of great help in reaching the moon or some other planet by serving as a kind of launching platform. A space-ship launched from the sputnik will have to attain a speed of no more than 3.1-3.6 kilometres per second, as against the speed of 11.2 needed for launching the missile from earth. He believes that space travel could be carried out with the help of thermo-chemical fuel, but says that atomic energy does make a tremendous difference and will be of the greatest help. He envisages space travel by human beings already in the present century, but is somewhat reticent with regard to the practical use and significance of these trips. One new idea introduced by Sternfeld is the possible exploitation of the natural resources to be found on other planets.

But with books like Sternfeld's we have moved out of the field of science fiction into the realm of speculative physics. This new literature opens an immense new vista—for going places. But precisely because it has become so much less fantastic, much of the excitement and the human (as against the technical) interest has gone out of it. Travel in space may soon become possible but the non-technicians are already beginning to realise that it would probably mean the transfer of our joys and worries to other planets, and not really add a new quality to human experience. The success of Ray Bradbury's stories in Russia suggests that the Soviet reader, too, realises that as some of yesterday's dreams come true, science fiction needs a new dimension in order to enable it to stay a few paces ahead of science.

II—Fantasy and Reality

Vera Alexandrova

The launching into space of an earth satellite, and then of a second one with a live dog inside it, has aroused interest everywhere in a literary genre which has so far not enjoyed special favour with readers generally but which is popular among Soviet youth. Here many surprises await the reading public: science fiction in the Soviet Union is fairly extensive. Before appearing in separate editions, the majority of novels and stories in this genre have been published either in *Around the World,* the long-established journal for young people, *The World Pathfinder* (the name is taken from Fenimore Cooper), or in the monthly periodical *Youth Engineering.*

Although a whole library of science fiction has been created during the forty years of Soviet rule, works of this genre attracted little attention among literary critics prior to the end of the 'forties. It would, however, be a mistake to imagine that this type of fiction was free from the general political control of the Communist Party. In an article 'Fiction and Reality' (*October,* January, 1950) Sergei Ivanov took sharply to task those men of letters who considered West European and American fiction to be forerunners of Soviet science fiction. For this statement alone Ivanov reproached such critics with 'cosmopolitanism' and even with 'kow-towing to the West.' He asserted that even

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a cursory comparison of Soviet and Western science fiction suffices to prove the 'originality' of the Russian type. As evidence Ivanov cited Mikhail Lomonosov, who as long ago as the middle of the eighteenth century wrote a book entitled *A Short Description of Various Journeys in the Northern Seas and an Indication of a Possible Route to India through the Siberian Ocean*. This book was considered in its day to be 'a genuine work of science fiction.' In it the great Russian scholar was the first to try to prove in an entertaining form the possibility of exploiting the Northern Sea Route, proposing to organise a special expedition for the purpose. Ivanov considers this book to be the forerunner of modern science fiction. Using it as an example, he tried to indicate the special features of Soviet science literature: in contradistinction to Western science fiction, which wanders 'outside time and space' and delights in subjects 'dealing with cosmic distances,' Soviet science fiction affirms 'the necessity for linking science with life and the practical application of scientific achievements.' A passing acquaintance with Soviet science fiction is sufficient to prove the deliberate tendentiousness of Ivanov's assertions.

Of the precursors of the modern science novel it is necessary to pick out the name of the scientist Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, the centenary of whose birth was celebrated in the Soviet Union last September. In Tsiolkovsky was combined the passionate dreamer, the scientist, and the inexhaustible inventor. Interesting information on the personality of the father of modern space rockets is contained in two works: *Tsiolkovsky: His Life and Technical Ideas*, by Yakov Perelman (Moscow, 1937), and *The Illustrious Man of Science, K. E. Tsiolkovsky*, by Professor Alexander Kosmodemyansky (Moscow, 1954). Professor Kosmodemyansky relates, *inter alia*, how, having come to Moscow at the age of 16 to continue his studies, it occurred to Tsiolkovsky on one occasion that it would be possible to reach cosmic space by the utilisation of centrifugal forces. 'I was so excited,' Tsiolkovsky himself says in his autobiography, 'that I couldn't sleep the whole night. I wandered through Moscow. By morning I was convinced of the falsity of my discovery. The disillusionment was as strong as the previous elation. That night left its mark on my whole life; after 30 years I still sometimes dream that I am travelling to the stars on my machine and I feel the same ecstasy as on that unforgettable night.' The intensity of Tsiolkovsky's dream may partly be explained by a particular feature of his life story, namely, the serious attack of scarlet fever which he suffered in his childhood. It left him almost completely deaf so that he had to give up schooling, study at home, and live in solitude.

Besides a large number of scientific works, Tsiolkovsky wrote several stories. The first was *Journey to the Moon* and was published as a supplement to *Around the World*, the magazine for young people, in 1892. The second, *Dreams of Earth and Sky*, was published by Goncharov, the nephew of the author of *Oblomov*, in 1895.

Soviet science fiction today shows the strong influence of Tsiolkovsky's ideas, particularly in those works which describe journeys into space. This applies primarily to the novel *Aelita*, by the late Alexei Tolstoy (1922). The writer obviously used Tsiolkovsky's ideas, particularly in the description of the apparatus invented by the engineer Los, the hero of the novel, for flying to Mars. The same influence may also be traced in many of the works of the late Alexander Belyaev (*The Star Kets, Leap Into Nothing*, and *The Airship*), of Vladimir Orlovsky (*The Revolt of the Atoms*), of Ivan Efremov (*The Nebula of Andromeda*), etc.

The oldest writer in the science fiction genre of Soviet literature is considered to be Belyaev (1884-1942). His literary legacy comprises more than fifty works, many of which, such as *The Head of Professor Dowell, The Human Amphibian, Leap Into Nothing*, and *The Star Kets*, enjoy great popularity among young people, and were also popular in their day among adults, who impatiently awaited each issue of *Around the World* or *The World Pathfinder* in which these stories were originally published. Alexander Belyaev did much to popularise Tsiolkovsky's ideas. Even the name of the star Kets (in the novel of that name) was composed of Tsiolkovsky's initials (Konstantin Eduardovich Tsiolkovsky) and the novel was dedicated to his memory. From childhood Belyaev was

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

distinguished by a lively and highly developed imagination and while still a boy he used to dream of a flying man (this dream was later embodied in the novel *Ariel*). From dreaming the boy soon turned to action. He began to jump from roofs. One of these jumps ended tragically when he broke his spine. At first it seemed that he would recover but at the age of 16 it became clear that he had contracted spinal tuberculosis. This did not prevent his graduating from the faculty of law and the conservatoire. He spent three years in bed in plaster of Paris, however, and wore a metal corset for the rest of his life. All this predisposed Belyaev to the same solitary life as Tsiolkovsky. Boris Lyapunov, the author of the preface to the new edition of the selected works of Belyaev (Moscow, 1957), suggests that perhaps this inactivity helped him to convey so authentically the experiences of Professor Dowell (in the novel of that name) who perceived the phenomena of the outside world through the agency of sight but was completely bereft of the sense of touch. The subject of the novel is unusual. Professor Kern has a new assistant, a young doctor, Mademoiselle Laurent. Kern takes her to his laboratory where she sees the living head of Professor Dowell, who has recently died. The head has no body. Kern asks his new assistant to say nothing about his work in the laboratory. It transpires that he has succeeded in restoring Dowell's head to life and in making it work for him. Kern gives out Dowell's ideas as his own. Mademoiselle Laurent, with the help of Dowell's son, and Lare, an artist, succeeds, after overcoming many difficulties, in exposing the crafty Kern. The novel appeared in 1926 and in 1928 the scientific problems posed in this work were discussed by the students and teachers at the Leningrad Institute of Medicine in the presence of the author.

The novel *Leap Into Nothing* describes a journey to Venus. This planet has long attracted the attention of astronomers because it is wrapped in a blanket of cloud and the presence around it of an atmosphere with a rather high carbon-dioxide content has been established. In specialised literature the supposition has been made that conditions on this planet may be similar to those existing on Earth during the carbonic period. All these hypotheses served Belyaev as a basis for one of the strands of his narrative. The characters in the novel, having landed on Venus in a time-machine, are, as it were, transported to the Earth's distant past. Lyapunov compares this novel with Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*. The description of the Earth's past as it exists on Venus is, however, only part of the plot. Much more entertaining is the description of the inter-planetary flight. It conveys the sense of exciting strangeness, and gives a vivid impression of the experiences of people who have escaped from the pull of the Earth's gravity. The equipment of the rocket and life in the middle of a vacuum are portrayed in accordance with Tsiolkovsky's hypotheses.

Another novel by Belyaev, *The Star Kets*, deals with an earth satellite, a space station, an idea which in his day Tsiolkovsky also put forward. In this novel, which appeared in 1940, the rocket reaches a speed of eight kilometres a second, *i.e.* exactly the speed of the Sputnik launched into space in October, 1957. The story is not given a very original framework. Leonid Artemiev, a young scientist specialising in fruit-growing, happens to make friends with Tonya Gerasimova, an assistant at an institute of mechanical physics. Together with Paley, an engineer, Tonya has worked out secret designs and made a series of calculations for a flight to the moon. Suddenly Paley disappears. Tonya asks Artemiev to fly with her to the town of Kets in the Pamirs where she hopes to find Paley. Soon Artemiev takes part in a flight first to the star Kets and then to the moon. From the star, the first sky base, rockets are sent every day to the earth. These rockets automatically record the composition of the atmosphere, the intensity of cosmic radiations, temperature, etc. For three-quarters of the journey the rocket is guided by radio waves from the star Kets and then it is taken over by a radio wave from the town of Kets in the Pamirs where the flight began. A considerable part of the novel is devoted to a description of the satellite rockets, by means of which it is possible to build a station to serve as an experimental laboratory in the Cosmos and a base for inter-planetary ships. All the discoveries of Artemiev and his

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

colleagues on the moon are excitingly described. The 'dead' moon is iridescent.

Belyaev's writings make his readers familiar with a whole series of scientific theories and the laws of nature—the characteristics of gravity, the nature of light, the properties of the atmosphere and of liquid air, and the theory of relativity. One of his books, *The Human Amphibian,* is constructed on the hypothesis that, by grafting gills on to a man, it is possible to create a being able to live under water. The operation, even if successful, is impracticable; in its defence Lyapunov cites Wells' novel *The Invisible Man,* which enjoys great popularity with Soviet readers and has become part of the 'golden treasury of science fiction.'

Vladimir Orlovsky's *Revolt of the Atoms,* written almost thirty years before the Sputnik was launched into space, deals with an earth satellite. Published in 1928, it tells how, as the result of lengthy researches and all manner of adventures, Professor Flidner succeeds in launching into space 'a second small moon.' For some time it seems the experiment has not been successful, but suddenly Mount Wilson Observatory in California discovers a new star moving independently across the sky between the constellations lying near the plane of the ecliptic. This second small moon follows its own undeviating path 'in the wilderness of space, according to the iron laws of external reason, illuminating with its light the dawn of a new epoch for the earth.'

Ivan Efremov is another very popular writer of science fiction. Formerly a sailor, then a professor of palæontology, a doctor of biology, a mining engineer, and an indefatigable traveller who had been all over Siberia, the Far East, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, Efremov came to literature rather late. In the journal *New World* (April-May, 1944) he published a series of stories, *Seven Compass Points,* which immediately attracted the attention of readers and critics. The stories are set in an ordinary framework. During the war, on one of the anxious days for Moscow, a group of people recently arrived from various parts of the USSR to obtain new appointments, assemble in the flat of a sea captain. An air raid begins and prevents them from going home. They spend the night recounting in turn noteworthy incidents they have experienced during their lifetime. Two of the narrators are long-distance sea-captains, one is a famous geologist, another a scientific research worker in Siberia, etc. It is difficult to say what, in these stories, is the result of actual discoveries, and what is the fruit of the author's imagination. All of them, however, infect their readers with the spirit of creative research. Two or three examples will illustrate this point. The story *The Lake of Mountain Spirits* tells how by the chance observation of a Kirghizian picture, a geologist discovers in the spurs of the Central Altai a large deposit of mercury, far surpassing in richness the reserves at Almadena in Spain. *The Diamond Pipe* (*New World,* April, 1945), relates how Churilin, the leader of an expedition, and his companion Sultanov, succeed in discovering very rich diamond fields. The most remarkable feature of this story is that it turned out to be prophetic. Ten years later very rich fields were in fact discovered in Yakutia and they were discovered after members of the expedition had studied with very great care the geological structure of the central Siberian plateau and noted its striking similarity to the structure of the South African plateau. Efremov's story contains one further detail which one would not wish to overlook. The story begins in the capital, in the study of the Head of the Main Committee. He orders Professor Ivashentsev (head of the institute in charge of the expedition) to send a telegram to stop the work, in view of the lack of results. Ivashentsev tries to defend the expedition, but in vain. All big discoveries, however, demand not only large resources but also devotion. On receiving the telegram from the centre, Churilin disbands the expedition but himself continues prospecting together with his closest assistant; they risk their lives, but emerge victorious.

Efremov is clearly moved by a yearning for free, creative work; it is the invisible axis of all his stories, and arouses a sympathetic response in his readers. His first novel, *The Nebula of Andromeda,* is at present appearing in the periodical *Youth Engineering* (beginning January, 1957). The action takes place in the fourth millennium with its highly developed technology and new human relations (these, incidentally,

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are distinguished by little that is new and recall relations characteristic of members of present-day Soviet expeditions; but there is certainly greater freedom, and at times elements of true comradeship). The novel tells of the discoveries of No. 37 space expedition, led by Erg Noor. Niza Krit, a young astronavigator, is taking part in the expedition for the first time. She loves Erg Noor, without suspecting how much this love imparts to Noor and how it helps him in times of crisis. A flight is made in the space-ship 'Tantra' which is instructed to find some trace of another space-ship 'Algrabu.' 'Tantra' is directed towards the planetary system of a near star in the constellation of Draco. It reaches Zirda, the only planet inhabited by living creatures, which has been trying for a long time to communicate with the 'Earthmen,' *i.e.* the inhabitants of this earth and other worlds in the Great Circle. 'Tantra' travels at a speed of 3,000 kilometres a second. On Zirda disillusionment awaits the members of the expedition: all is deserted and dark on the planet, with not a single light anywhere. Immense fields of black poppies are the only things to be seen—the only plants to withstand strong radio-activity. Erg Noor tells Niza that 85 years before space expedition No. 34 had been sent into the large system of Vega or Alpha Lira. The majority of its space ships perished. 'Parus' alone held out and reached its destination. It perished on the return journey, however, from causes still unexplained (either having fallen a victim to a passing meteorite or because of some serious defect). 'Tantra' returns safely to earth. The novel is still not finished. . . .

It is impossible here to cover the entire field of Soviet science fiction, but some attempt can be made to define the characteristic groups of problems which attract the readers' attention more than others. Journeys to the Universe form one of the most popular subjects; no less widespread are the themes which may be described as *realistic fiction.* Alexander Belyaev's *Under Arctic Skies,* for example, may be assigned to this genre. It describes an underground health resort deep under the earth inside the Arctic Circle. Here people make weather to their own liking and in general control the climate. Here it is always warm and the sun is shining. . . .

This group of books on themes of realistic fiction embraces many works by Vadim Okhotnikov (*In the World of Research*), Alexander Kron's play *Prospecting* (1943), *Black Gold,* by Vladimir Nemtsov (1950), a novel dealing with the same theme, *i.e.* the extraction of oil from the bottom of the Caspian Sea, and the extensive sketch by Ivan Osipov, *The Island of Seven Ships* (*Novy Mir,* March, 1951). This sketch describes entertainingly how present-day oil-men found interesting data in old shipping journals to the effect that sea captains used to guess their nearness to a dangerous place in the Caspian Sea called Black Cliffs by the smell of oil which was borne on the wind. Only in the 'twenties of the present century, however, did Azerbaidjanian oil-men succeed in organising exploratory work in the zone adjoining the Apsheron Peninsula. . . .

For all the incompleteness of this survey (which has ignored many works adversely criticised, and therefore inaccessible to the outside world, as for example Sergei Belyaev's *Lord of the Lightning* or Igor Vsevolzhsky's story *The Fate of a Perspicacious Man* published in the Caucasus in 1948), it does show the absurdity of the assertions of Soviet critics that only stories which stress the link between science and life are popular among young people.

III—East and West

Zeev ben Shlomo

THE art of science fiction, as defined in the *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopedia,* is 'a form of belles-lettres which presents, in a vivid and exciting manner, the possibilities of scientific and technical progress, of man's penetration into the secrets of nature. As a literary form it overlaps with those of the utopian novel and the adventure story.' According to the same authority, 'it does not describe the struggle for change in existing social relations'—the need for which,

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

however, is pointed out by a comparison between Soviet science fiction and that of the Western world. In the words of the Encyclopedia: 'In our days, bourgeois science fiction, American and European, has forfeited the right to be called scientific. It holds up to admiration, at one and the same time, banditry and the police forces, images of war and of the destruction of civilization by the use of atomic energy. Such are the favourite themes of bourgeois science fiction.' In contrast with this, 'Soviet science fiction is developing along the lines of socialist realism.'

If one tried to plot the curve of the development of Soviet science fiction from the 'thirties until now, it would closely follow a similar graph of the ups and downs of Soviet literature in general. In this present article let us examine a selection of the books of science fiction published in the USSR and see whether they live up to the official specification—whether, for instance, they are quite free from that dwelling upon violence, 'banditry,' glorification of the police force, and of 'scenes of war and the destruction of civilization' which the Soviet critic ascribes solely to 'bourgeois' practitioners of the art.

If it were true that science fiction had nothing to do with the 'depiction of the struggle to change existing social relations' some of the best Western masters of science fiction would be disqualified. The works of H. G. Wells, for instance, and of Isaac Azimov, have a strong social and political bias. On the other hand, the Soviet writers said to be 'contributing to the building of socialism,' and obeying the dictates of 'socialist realism,' are very strictly enjoined not to change, but to perpetuate the forms of the society in which they live.

The last point is of some importance; for, according to orthodox Marxian theory, Communism itself is a social form like any other in the sense that it is temporary. And it is precisely technical progress, by the same theory, that will cause this form of society like its predecessors to be superseded and pass away. This confronts the Soviet science fiction writer with what may be an awkward ideological dilemma—and a dangerous temptation to try to improve upon what is officially pronounced perfect.

The dullest period of Soviet science fiction was during the dominance of the socialist realism of Stalin and Zhdanov. The science fiction writers seem to have abstained from all dreams and visions of the far future. It is only in the last year or two—which have witnessed a marked advance in both the quantity and the quality of this literature—that a lightening of the taboos has brought this dilemma to light.

We shall try to survey the period by taking some typical examples of this kind of fiction which are available in the West. The high standard that it attained during the 1920s was largely due to the bracing and eager air of creative research, which had also a stimulating effect in Russia's cinema and in its literature in general. The temporary brilliance of the experimental novelists in the 'twenties lit up a path of progress for the producers of good science fiction, of which there had been little before the 1914 war and the revolution.

But later, when science fiction was harnessed to 'socialist realism,' its productions were of less interest: for there is no *genre* of literature that is so completely dependent upon the unfettered imagination and free intellectual speculation. After the disappearance of Alexander Grin from the literary scene in the early 'thirties, the increasing output of science fiction was of the kind in which neither plot nor imagination is of primary importance. The more respectable works aimed simply at the popularisation of scientific and technical knowledge. While, in the West, the ruling themes were (as they have remained) those of interplanetary travel and of visions of the future course of civilisation and technics, often with a strong human interest in the possible psychological consequences, Soviet authors were restricting their purview. They were concentrating upon concrete, material possibilities which would hardly have sparked off the imagination of their Western colleagues, but were calculated to quicken interest in the next five-year plan. They took their material from geology (the search for minerals needed by Soviet industries), from agriculture, and, notably, from the conquest of the Arctic—a national enterprise which has left its marks all over Soviet literature and journalism, as in the well-known book by Boris Gorbatov,

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The possibilities of new methods in agriculture, and the discovery of new food resources, certainly provide themes that are not without promise for the imaginative writer. But what the science fiction writers produced in response to the vociferous official demand for *kolkhoz* novels, was a hybrid variety of literature, generally poor in quality, of which Vladimir Nemtsov's *The Seven Colours of the Rainbow* is an example. The worst disadvantage to a writer of thus subordinating his fancy to a utilitarian aim is that he has to deal with a sphere of facts which may outshine his fiction. The actual achievements of technics on this plane eclipse anything he can convincingly imagine.

Obruchev's *Plutonia* and *The Land of Sanimkov,* published in the 'twenties, give a better idea of the special characteristics by which science fiction in Russia differs from that of the West. Two aims, which are more or less relevant for all science fiction, are in Russia liable to be pursued to extremes. One of these is escapism. The needs of the Soviet public for an escape from reality are intensified by the virtual non-existence, in the Soviet Union, of the adventure stories, the detective and spy stories which are so abundant in the West. Science fantasy is the one permitted refuge from socialist realism. The second aim, which is almost the opposite of escapism, is a consciously, even ostentatiously educational purpose, which is stimulated by the need of attuning the public mind to the State's practical designs. Needless to add, the latter purpose is painfully overweighted when the writer is also under pressure to provide approved political indoctrination. This has been an insistent demand during certain periods, when literary production was under strict party supervision. Conversely, it is during periods of relative liberalisation that the escapist element has had freer play. Obruchev, himself no mean scientist, and now a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, has been the great exemplar of the educational purpose in science fiction, weaving his romances around geological themes and projects.

For 15 years before the death of Stalin, this 'applied' or educational motive was dominant in science fiction, with only a few exceptions, mostly near the end of the Second World War. Typical of its products are the works of Grigori Borisovich Adamov (who died in 1946), including his first book *Conquerors of the Depths of the Earth* (1937). This is the story of a team of men who descend to the centre of the Earth in a hermetically sealed shell, in order to exploit the Earth's heat as a source of energy. His second book, *The Secret of the Two Oceans,* was publicised as 'a call to serve the homeland in the light of approaching war'; its narrative is centred in the voyage of a submarine from Leningrad to Vladivostok, in order to strengthen the Soviet war fleet in the East. Its human interest as a work of fiction is subordinate to the information it conveys about marine biology, chemistry, physics, and the work of submarine crews and frogmen. The same author's *The Banishment of a Ruler* (1940) appeared at a time when science fiction had to conform most strictly to the demands of party supervision, and it was dedicated to the theme of 'Labour and Vigilance.' The story it tells, of an imaginary project to raise the temperature of the Arctic regions, is full of facts and of descriptions of the physiography and natural history of these regions, and of the technical problems of exploiting their natural resources. Its essential interest, however, is not technical; a dramatic element is provided by its account of attempts at sabotage by the 'enemies of the people' and their triumphant frustration by the heroic conduct of the 'Chekists.'

In the more liberal atmosphere that prevailed in the USSR at the end of the Second World War, a number of books appeared which were definitely escapist. The most interesting was *The Adventures of Samuel Pingle,* of which we shall have more to say later. This was at the beginning of the 'cold war' period, the atmosphere of which is dominant in *The Arctic Bridge* by Alexander Kazantsev (1946); the book is not about a bridge but a tunnel. It recounts an attempt to connect the American continent with the northern coast of the Soviet Union, by tunnelling under the Arctic Ocean. The vicissitudes of the grandiose sub-oceanic operations carried on by both the USSR and the United States, burrowing from opposite sides in hostile

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

competition, constitute a fantasy that is intentionally more diverting than instructive.

But during the fifties, the educational purpose again becomes dominant, notably in the works of Vladimir Nemtsov (already mentioned in connection with the demand for 'kolkhoz' literature). His book *The Golden Sea Floor* deals with a project for tapping the oil reserves under the Caspian Sea; for which purpose his scientist heroes construct a 'mobile house' which moves along the sea floor. Two other books of his, *Shadow over the Earth* and *Instrument SL-1*, from the series 'First Tests' (1951), are primarily works of geographical and geological information.

The pressure to produce science fiction of a politically edifying tenor has consequences of which *The New Planet* by V. Saparin is a representative case. This is a propagandist problem-story, designed to keep the reader's mind in increasing suspense until the moment when the mystery is solved. From the artistic point of view it is a tawdry production; and the conception is almost pathetic in its innocence. The tale is of a young Soviet scientist who succeeds in obtaining some coloured photographs taken with a telescopic camera from a rocket flying through interplanetary space. The photographs depict an unidentified planet. He shows these to his uncle, an elderly teacher, who spends the next seventeen pages trying to guess whether they are pictures of Venus, photographed from within its own atmosphere, or of Mars, or of some new asteroid of fabulous dimensions wandering between Mars and Jupiter. Then the young scientist goes off on a rocket journey into outer space; and meanwhile the old teacher's ruminations are depicted in a series of 'flash-back' incidents recording his memories of the marvellous progress of the Soviet Union. All this is meant to heighten the tension of expectation until the sudden, astounding revelation, or rather recognition, that the New Planet is the one we live upon! We had forgotten that Mother Earth has had her face lifted!—beautified by the accomplishment of the Soviet's five-year plans. The countenance of the world, viewed from the heights of space, has been transfigured by the creation of new lakes, the diversion of rivers, the removal of mountains, and the new green belts of Stalin's reafforestation plan, etc.

Whether a given work is or is not to be regarded as primarily of escapist tendency is not a question of its subject alone: the decisive factor is the author's approach to it, and his treatment of his characters. Lazar Lagin's *Patent A-B*, for instance, is politically tendentious at first sight in that it presents a rather unkind view of life under a capitalist régime. But this book (which appeared in the 'forties) was not written in response to any 'social command' and it deals very fairly with its subject. It describes the invention of a drug that produces rapid growth in animals or human beings, and the adventures of a dwarf who is treated by it and restored to normal proportions. This theme enables the writer to display his considerable talent for satire in the depiction of a number of fantastic and ludicrous human situations between persons with Spanish-sounding names, in an imaginary country.

But the one writer who has produced a classic of this kind, a work of almost pure escapism, is S. M. Belaev in his *The Adventures of Samuel Pingle* (1945). This work well deserves its great popularity: the richness and ingenuity of the plot, and the variety of the situations, each one more fantastic than the last, would ensure its success as an adventure-story for young readers almost anywhere. It is about an impoverished British aristocrat, who turns out to be a great scientist suffering persecution from a powerful capitalist combine, which is plotting to steal and exploit his inventions.

The objects of this Lord Pucklington's research and invention are more like those familiar to us in American and European scientific romances than what one expects to find in a book for Soviet youth. The scientific nobleman invents a toxic drug which has the effect of deforming the cells of the skin and the bones of the skull. This biochemical preparation, administered to some worthy citizens of a little English town called Ashwharf, produces a number of humourous situations and complications, which furnish a background for the picturesque adventures of the hero Samuel Pingle. Pingle has been educated in a most exclusive, aristocratic college and holds a fellowship at Dijon under the sponsorship of Lord Puckling-

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ton: but he is obliged to give this up when his noble patron is convicted of crime upon false charges, and deprived of his honours and estates. Pingle, having worked for a while, first as a plantation inspector in India, and then as an acrobat in a circus, is himself arrested in America and accused of the murder of—Samuel Pingle. Later, he works in a laboratory, investigating virus-cultures and snake venoms under two scientists, both of whom, in the end, turn out to be the Lord Pucklington who has changed his face by means of his own invention in order to elude his persecutors. Finally the nobleman regains his estates, Pingle marries his sweetheart, and the story ends happily in the approved bourgeois manner.

It is of considerable interest to a Western reader to find a book for Soviet youth which presents a British aristocrat and his close friends in such a favourable light, while the villains it portrays are commercial agents, petty-bourgeois, or semi-proletarians. Devoid as it is of any didactic, pedagogic, or social purpose, and revolving as it does around an imaginary invention which has practically no social relevance at all, this fantastic performance is inspired by a pure delight in the art of story-telling, to a degree that is all too rare in Soviet science fiction.

It is rather surprising to see how few books of this kind have exploited the possibilities of atomic science. The present writer has seen only one that does so—*Rulers of the Lightning,* by Belaev, which is of a kind of atomic science fiction very much like our own. Still more conspicuous is the absence of any work at all that describes a Soviet sputnik, with or without a crew of scientists. However, a thing that might be called a capitalist sputnik figures in one of the most interesting pieces of Soviet science fiction of recent years. But this is a very special kind of sputnik, created by mistake. The book in question, *Atavia Proxima* (1956), by Lazar Lagin, is about a capitalist country called Atavia. This is pretty obviously a caricature of the United States, as one can see from the names of the characters, from allusions to the persecution of negroes, to manifestations like those of 'McCarthyism,' and to the men having fought on the Western side in the last great war, some of them in the Korean war. It begins with a great international conference in Europe, attended by the President and his Foreign Secretary, of which the ostensible aim is peace; but the conference masks a gigantic act of provocation. Hundreds of atomic bombs are to be dropped upon peaceful countries, in circumstances which will make it appear that they have been dropped from Soviet aircraft. By this means, the rulers of Atavia hope to arouse the wrath of the whole world against the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies, and then to proclaim a world crusade against them. But the plot miscarries. The officer who is appointed to press the button and unleash the forces of death and destruction is unnerved by pangs of conscience, and he presses the wrong button. Fifteen hundred atomic bombs, stock-piled in underground vaults, explode *in situ,* transmitting formidable vibrations to the centre of the Earth. The result is a cosmic catastrophe, by which the continent of Atavia becomes separated from the rest of the Earth, rises to the height of 59,000 kilometres, and circles around the Earth like another Moon. Smaller portions of the same continent become smaller sputniks, to which the astronomers give the names of Atavia Beta, Atavia Gamma, etc., while the main body is called Atavia Proxima, on account of its proximity to the Earth. The author admits, at this point, that he is unable to explain how the atmosphere and the tracts of water could be retained on the surface of the new planet with its greatly reduced gravitation. Of the parent body, too, he says, 'We will excuse ourselves for omitting any analysis of the reasons why the Earth, after losing a vast continent, was none the worse for it. Especially as we shall be dwelling upon the *political* aspects of the transformation' (p. 29).

Unfortunately it is impossible to show, within the space of an article, how really unconventional this book is in comparison with the mass of Soviet science fiction. It is evidently influenced by the experimental novels of the 'twenties and early 'thirties, with their strongly satirical element—exemplified in, for instance, *The Ships Sail* by Vladimir Lidin, and *I Burn Paris* by Bruno Jasienski (the latter a Polish Communist who was shot in 1937 but 'rehabilitated' in

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1956). One is reminded of that best-seller of Jasienski's—in which Paris is exterminated by the Black Death after being purposely infected with it by a desperado—when one reads Lagin's descriptions of cities totally destroyed by air raids. But the chief surprise in reading Lagin's book is its treatment of certain practices of totalitarian states—almost in the manner of George Orwell's *1984*—which must arouse familiar echoes in the minds of intelligent Soviet readers.

In *Atavia Proxima* the atomic disaster which turns a continent into a satellite incidentally wrecks the state laboratory for bacteriological warfare, setting free a multitude of mice and beetles infected with the plague. The reaction of officialdom is promptly to accuse a refugee from Vienna of having blown up the laboratory. This Viennese scapegoat is a famous physicist, Professor Emmanuel Gross, who has already been 'investigated' by an Atavian institution very much like the McCarthy special committee. The ensuing description, of the 'frame-up' trial of an innocent intellectual, cannot have failed to stir the feelings of Soviet readers of a book whose first chapters were written at the time of the 'doctors' plot' in their midst. Moreover, the author clearly implies that political troubles may produce bogus courts of justice. In Atavia the ruling clique diverts attention from its misdeeds by staging a show trial of a famous movie actor, Erwin Ragg, indicted as an agent of the Kremlin. It is clearly stated (p. 369) that this trial is all arranged in advance: everyone, accusers and accused alike, are playing well-rehearsed parts.

Since the Atavian continent, having lost nearly all its foreign markets, is in danger of serious unemployment, the Atavian Deputy President and Chief of Staff confer with the chiefs of the neighbour-state Poligonia (naturally in the same predicament) to concert remedial measures. They conclude a gentlemen's agreement to join in a 'phoney war,' which will not only maintain full employment but maintain their respective régimes in power. All the battles, conquests, and withdrawals are pre-arranged and carried out according to plan, perpetuating just the 'state of emergency' required. In the last stages of this war the Strongman Licurg Pa'arkh—who is a fascist figure modelled on McCarthy—seizes dictatorial powers; and one of the first orders he gives is for the judicial murder of one Arthur Pilck, who knows too much about the Strongman's past. This again is accomplished by a well-organised bogus trial, after which the murderer writes a laudatory obituary of his victim. This whole conspiracy is much more like one of Stalin's purges (such, *e.g.*, as the Kirov case) than Hitler's 30th June, upon which it was ostensibly modelled.

A 'democratic' revolution in Poligonia and a *coup d'état* in Atavia follow, as soon as it is realised that the Atavian satellite has too little power of gravitation to keep its atmosphere, which it is rapidly losing and will have lost altogether in another 15 years. The new rulers see no solution for this problem, except the conquest of a new *lebensraum* on the Earth, to be effected by rockets, atomic and hydrogen bombs. The 'progressive' scientists, on the other hand, work out a scheme for making the sputnik continent rotate against its orbit, which would enable it to keep its atmosphere. The alternatives before these luckless peoples are outlined by the author at the end of his book. They must decide, he says, whether they want to have a future of their own and breathe their own air. If they would prefer to annex the Earth's atmosphere, however, they must try to conquer the Earth—without any reasonable chance of success. And with this dilemma ends, not unnaturally, the story of the Western sputnik.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Lopatkins at Work

THE IMAGE OF THE SCIENTIST

*George Gibian**

RECENT successes of Soviet science, which jolted many foreign observers, came as less of a surprise to those who were familiar with the great emphasis Soviet literature has been placing on science and research, and to whom the firing of intercontinental missiles and satellites suggests that Soviet reality may now be catching up with Soviet fiction.

Russian writers have been favouring scientific and technological subjects since the 'thirties, particularly intensely in the 'forties and 'fifties. Soviet readers are familiar with the numerous scientists' progress reports published in magazines, with scientific popularisations and biographies of scientists, authentic or fictional; they have become accustomed to predictions based on a mixture of scientific fact and conjecture (such as a recent 'Report from the Twenty-first Century,' in which fifteen Soviet scholars contemplated the vistas opening before scientists in various fields, exemplified by the prediction that 'a geographer of the future will occupy himself with the active transformation of the character of individual places, regions, perhaps whole continents'); to stories and novels based on past and current scientific work; and to what is known in the West as 'science fiction' —fantasies of future developments.

The Communist Party has vigorously encouraged all the means of popularising technology and science—the term for which, *nauka,* in Russian usage covers scholarship and learning in the humanities and social sciences as well as in the natural sciences. It has been moved to do so by the need to recruit and train an ever-larger pool of technicians from among a population largely peasant and unmechanical, and by its tendency to endow science with many of the attributes formerly attached to religion. Soviet Marxism claims to be a scientific tool for the investigation and control of reality; it regards all science as allied and sacred.

After the death of Stalin, and particularly since the Twentieth Congress, the Party permitted writers to attack bureaucratic rigidity and red tape more openly, and to expose abuses in institutional organisations and personal attitudes, in an attempt to use literature as a tool with which to remove the growths preventing the healthy development of technology.

Let us select from the multitude of recent Soviet novels about science a few typical examples of the various uses made of science and of the attitudes towards science which they reveal. We may obtain a picture of some of the strengths as well as weaknesses of Soviet science.

First let us look at an instance of the conventional representation of a scientific subject in a book approved by the Party, propagandising for and against exactly what the Party wishes to be praised or condemned, Alexander Bek's *The Life of Berezhkov* (*Novy Mir,* 1-3, 1957). A cross between a documentary and a novel, it is unimaginative in its literary form. An aircraft-engine designer, Alexey Berezhkov, tells the story of his career—of his work before 1917, and of the successive models of Soviet airplane motors he designed, of higher and higher horse power.

The novel is a linear tale of struggles against obstacles, ending with complete success. The technological theme is used to provide suspense in the shape of a conflict between the designer and the laws of recalcitrant nature, or between him and obtuse, ignorant, or ill-intentioned colleagues and superiors. The obstacles are

*Professor Gibian wishes to acknowledge his debt in writing this essay to the American Philosophical Society.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

never very formidable, however, one feels certain of his ultimate success.

More significantly, the novel is a *Bildungsroman*. Berezhkov is taught a number of lessons in the course of his career. Bek presents him as first learning the rudiments of research: he must know his own business, the designing of engines. Next he is trained more generally in personal virtues: the importance of modesty, of understanding other people, of knowing how to learn from one's elders and superiors, brought home to him through telling incidents.

Berezhkov's social education is given the greatest emphasis. As a young man, he is unaware of the social situation in his country and of the place of his own work within it. Even in the NEP period, he is blithely oblivious to the social implications of his work. He reflects on this: 'At that time the positions of individualism, of "technology for the sake of technology," seemed irrefutable to me. Later, in a socialistic world, it was not easy for me to arrive at a different understanding of the laws of creative work, of talent.'

He is taught to recognise 'the crimes of the Tsarist Government crushing Russian talent.' Young Communists explain to him that specialists now must 'pay attention to questions of general outlook on life' and that 'talent implies obligation.' The question of the position in Soviet society of a man of exceptional endowment is treated by Bek rather schematically. He concludes piously and vaguely that a man of genius is entitled to better pay than the average worker—but he must work for socially useful ends, not for himself alone. Bek also seems quite confident that the Party will find a suitable place for the man of genius and that no insurmountable problems will arise once the scientist realises and accepts his proper rôle.

Airplane engine designing leads to comparisons of Russia with foreign countries. To begin with, no engines are manufactured in Russia; all must be imported. Berezhkov is painfully conscious of Russian backwardness. Bek tries to show how servile the Russians had to be in the early days, and how quickly they not only caught up with foreign manufacturers, but surpassed them, so that in the end the Russians produced an engine far more powerful than any Western model. The resentment of Russian technical inferiority and the great rôle played by national pride as a stimulus to scientific advance are shown in an episode in which Berezhkov looks at a glossy United States magazine with pictures of aircraft engines and is asked to copy the design for Russian manufacture. An onlooker regrets that only illustrations are given without calculations or designing data, and Berezhkov comments bitterly, 'I wish American designers were studying photographs of my motor, our motor, and that they were saying among themselves, "The devil take it, there are no designers' descriptions and no calculation data; how are we to produce it?"' The Five Year Plans are presented as great opportunities for men with Berezhkov's nationalistic psychology to help Russia catch up with foreign countries; this desire, previously frustrated, reflects an attitude with direct bearing on the response of Soviet scientists to the professional and industrial demands made on them.

Among other things which Bek emphasises as important for Berezhkov to learn are discipline (he tends to be a lone wolf and a troublemaker who must be taught at what point praiseworthy independence passes into insubordination; Bek appears to favour the mean between the smooth, easy-to-get-along-with personality and the excessively rough individualist); the need to adapt his designs to the available production facilities (scientists must remember that their work should be of immediate practical usefulness and suitable for large-scale manufacture); and the proper view of Soviet living standards and consumer goods (contempt is shown for the bathtubs which have to be installed in foreign engineers' and instructors' houses; enthusiastic industrial effort is more important than 'luxuries,' which must wait until later).

Bek shows little understanding of basic research. Applied work is his only interest. His portrait of a designer is naïve and romantic, an individual brooding over a problem for a few minutes—or perhaps a couple of days—and then suddenly coming up with the finished idea for the entire model.

Venyamin Kaverin's *Searches and Hopes* (*Literaturnaya Moskva*, vol. II, 1956) deals with penicillin research. The heroine, Tatyana

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Valsenkova, struggles for facilities to develop a Soviet version of the drug. In the later part of the book another interest dominates the novel: her husband, Andrey, is unjustly accused, sentenced, and finally released. The action takes place between the early stages of the war, with the Germans outside Moscow, and New Year's Day of 1956.

Biology, laboratory research, and science in general make up the atmosphere the characters breathe. As the action moves on, the focus shifts to the bureaucracy of science, the men in charge, and they are depicted in a most unfavourable light. The worst among the villains is Kramov, who has tried to block the development of the drug. Later he advocates purchasing penicillin abroad, denounces Andrey, and plays a part in sentencing him. Kramov has placed his henchmen in key positions in many ministries and research institutes; no one dares to help Andrey; everybody either assumes his guilt or avoids him and Tatyana because it is advisable to cultivate the fortunate and powerful and to avoid the unfortunate and the disgraced. The struggle Tatyana wages against Kramov and in defence of her husband (successful partly as a result of the help given by Kramov's wife, who is revolted by his conduct and turns over useful information to Tatyana, and partly as a result of Stalin's death and the subsequent review of sentences) is the occasion for Kaverin's exploration of the scoundrels who have usurped positions of power in Soviet ministries. As Kramov's wife says of her husband to Tatyana:

> You do not know him yet. Only one thing can help you—his death. Otherwise he will succeed in bringing about—I don't know what—humiliation, destruction, and death, if not physical, then spiritual. He is an outlaw. He gained all this by robbery—money, a splendid apartment, rugs, furniture, glory, his connections. . . . There are hundreds like him. Oh more—thousands. And they support each other. They fear and hate each other, yet how they support each other, how painstakingly they cover up for each other.

Kramov appears as the Machiavelli of Soviet science, playing politics, offering favours in return for favours, suggesting shady compromises.

Other weaknesses of Soviet science are exposed in this novel. A Russian scientist says after a visit to Sweden: 'In Sweden the director of the institute receives you at the laboratory table. . . . The director works with his hands and does not wear out his trousers at meetings,' whereas in Russia 'in a scientific research institute with one hundred and twenty people in it, twenty actually work in science and the others only take their pay, have their laboratory assistants do the work, use up animals, and take up room of which there is not enough anyway.'

In the early part of the book Kaverin appears to find praiseworthy the desire among scientists for applause from foreign countries. He takes an obvious delight in the Russian ability to develop penicillin. While acknowledging the priority of the British process, he indicates the superiority of the Russian drug in a contest staged during the visit of a British scientist to Russia. Two groups of patients are treated with drugs made in the two countries; they prove equally effective, but the Russians use far smaller doses than the British and hence carry off a moral victory.

Towards the end of the book, however, in the post-Stalinist years, the heroes come to regard scientific chauvinism as hateful and ridiculous:

> Don't you see how all around us people have gone simply mad over Russian priority? It will appear that we invented the moon and the stars, not to speak of penicillin. . . . In the years after the war we were given the strange task of proving that our medical science was developing with extraordinary speed, or at least more quickly than the science of other countries or the whole world. The biggest discoveries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were ours and nobody else's—this was affirmed in books and articles, in films and in the theatre. Nobody noticed that by claiming a fabricated, imaginary priority, we lost the genuine one, gained in tormented work and research. . . . None of us had the right to share his discoveries even with a neighbouring laboratory. Oh what secrecy, what twilight, in which we could hardly distinguish each other. . . . How many clever men who had nothing whatsoever to do with medical science received high positions under the cover of artificial secrecy. . . . False, fabricated science lived a wretched life of artificial animation. Discussions were organised in order to show to the whole world the splendour of creativity, the clash of opinions. But under that artificial light only the shabby decorations of dogmatism, ready-made reports, prompted ideas, were visible.

At the end of the novel the heroes are preoccupied with the question whether the deplorable conditions had really been corrected or

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whether the Kramovites still hold sway despite the appearance of improvement.

Kaverin's book corresponds roughly with what the Party envisaged when it encouraged bold criticism, except that it goes much further than the Party wished. Instead of brushing off a few cobwebs, Kaverin made a head-on attack on conditions in science. Science is to him a lofty endeavour with great potentialities for eliminating pain, curing and preventing disease; he is outraged by the usurpation of institutions which he considers sacred in function and unlimited in possibility by men who thwart their aims and abuse them for personal ends.

Daniel Granin's story *His Own Opinion* (*Novy Mir*, 1956, 8) went far beyond the criticism he had made of scientific conditions in his previous novel, *The Searchers*, as well as beyond the Party's desire to extend the limits of permissible criticism. It has been the object of one of the most severe attacks on recent Soviet literary works. Olkhovsky, a young, rough, trouble-making engineer, writes an article criticising the wastefulness and inefficiency of a motor designed by an important Academician. An older man, Minaev, refuses to have the article published unless the critical parts are omitted—which would leave the story without any point. Olkhovsky then tactlessly makes every effort to publish the article in defiance of the ban, alienating many people in the process. Granin's story is the account of a series of collisions between Olkhovsky and the wall of self-protection around the powerful Academicians and their friends. In the end Olkhovsky is defeated, and he is transferred to a provincial laboratory. His figure recalls Molière's Alceste, or Chatsky in Griboedov's *Woe from Wit*. By implication, the society which he attacks and which removes him as an uncomfortably stubborn critic is comparable to the corrupt Tsarist society pilloried by Griboedov.

Granin's earlier novel and other works had shown powerful men opposing innovations and abusing their position to block the worthy projects of younger men. What is new in *His Own Opinion* is the complete victory of the men in power and the utter defeat of the rebellious innovator. The story is not really focused on science or technology. Granin is less concerned with the damage done to the economy—a matter of primary interest to the Party and its main motive in permitting a 'thaw'—than with the damage to the personalities of men caught in the system. Minaev's mind is the refracting medium of the story. Olkhovsky reminds Minaev of himself as a young man. He remembers his own reforming zeal, his eagerness to criticise and to improve conditions; and he recalls the humiliating lessons which brought home to him his inability to put his ideas into practice. A production engineer had told him, 'If you come here once more with such nonsense, I'll kick you out of the plant'; and a section head, 'It's too early for you to be drawing yourself up so high. Where do you think you're going, you with your tiny strength, against the chief production engineer? He will shut the door on your whole future. What are you? A foreman. Those they swallow without chewing.' He had decided to keep silent and build his career; later he would become bold and critical again, from a position of power. He now realises that that time will never come: his hands will always be tied. He is unable even now to help Olkhovsky, as he feels he should.

Granin is most deeply concerned over the mass demoralisation which has been going on in Soviet technology. 'He voted yes when his conscience urged him to vote no. He spoke words he did not believe. He praised what he should have berated.' Science in this story is primarily the locale of a social and power structure which exacts a great price in human corruption. It is the debasement of youthful aspirations, generous passions, truthfulness, and courage, and not the waste of fuel in an inefficient motor that really generate Granin's indignation. There is a shift here from a view of science as a means of advancing the material welfare of mankind, helping the sick or conquering nature, to a view of science under present Soviet conditions as a milieu in which moral damage is inflicted on well-intentioned men.

Vladimir Dudintsev's *Not By Bread Alone* also belongs to this genre of novels about inventors. An inventor's struggle for the adoption of his superior pipe-casting machine provides Dudintsev with the opportunity to

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

comment on the tyranny of evil men in power; the difficulty of obtaining redress; the corruption of the soul of a man caught in the system—this time of the villain Drozdov and others. Less familiar is his attitude towards the exceptional man, the genius or the inventor. Dudintsev regards him almost as a poet, with a reverence deeper than the formal respect of the basically uncomprehending and unsympathetic Bek. Inventions and research are to Dudintsev poetry, in the sense of 'making,' 'creation.' One reason for his indignation with the pedestrian bureaucrats who frustrate inventors is their inability to appreciate the dignity of the inventor's work.

On one side Dudintsev sees a pyramid of power, inhabited by the custodians and popularisers of the old knowledge, where material rewards are distributed in inverse ratio to merit and originality. But on the other side the scale of values is different, and the inventor ranks highest. Dudintsev compares him to a Promethean figure, to a poet, to a romantic hero. Drozdov's wife, who falls in love with the hero Lopatkin, says that even when everything has been taken from the inventor, he will 'still give light to the people.' Another character is reminded of the line of the poet Bryusov, 'We shall carry lighted lamps into the catacombs, into deserts and caverns.' The inventor is bound to be accused of dissent, for he 'is always someone who thinks differently, in any field of knowledge, because he has found a new, shorter road, and rejects the old, customary one.' He is therefore a nonconformist. The inventor is a 'second-floor' man, the average citizen a 'first-floor' man. Those who have discovered something new have raised themselves to a higher floor and from that vantage point can guide the others and show the way to them. 'The discoverer of new things says, "Look, we must go this way." He cannot produce first-floor values, because that is something he has left behind. It is just the same as making copies instead of creating great originals. Forgetful of self, the second-floor man hurries to grasp and turn over to the people all that he sees. He creates the greatest values and says to the first-floor people: popularise it, multiply it. But they do not understand. They walk below in the circle of known, familiar things, and chase the old man upstairs.' Here we are far from Bek's facile view of the genius as a man for whom the Party will certainly find a suitable niche if only he will set himself to work loyally for the community in the manner mapped out for him by the Party.

Nationalist pride in the geniuses of Russia's past contributes to Lopatkin's indignation with the philistine Drozdov, who reproaches him for his aspirations. 'A Russian sits in front of you and threatens you with the great danger that you may become a genius in your country. One cannot be a river, only a little drop. This is the opinion of the son of a country which counts great talents in the tens, in big quantities!'

* * *

From the writings examined here, and from Soviet literary works with a scientific setting as a whole, it is clear that to Soviet writers and readers science has become one of the most popular themes. Living in an age of science, they have turned engineering, forestry, electronics, geography, aeronautics, to literary use. Beyond its importance to the welfare of men living today, as well as to the material well-being of future generations, science is an activity dramatising the triumphs of human ingenuity, training, and perseverance. The scientist's career is regarded as a process of learning—first of scientific techniques, attitudes, discipline; then of teamwork and the importance of production; and finally of the scientist's social responsibilities. But this is a far from straightforward matter; the position of the man of exceptional talent within Soviet society is a problematic and disturbing issue to Soviet writers. For after the Party made it known that more outspoken criticism than in the past would be acceptable, Soviet writers displayed an intense preoccupation with the negative aspects of Soviet industrial and scientific organisation, transgressing the limits of licensed criticism. Instead of showing the evil bureaucrat as an isolated and unusual figure, they portrayed him as the prevailing type. The honest inventor was the lonely exception.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HALFWAY UP THE LADDER

The Party Secretary in the Post-war Soviet Novel

Philip Bruce Cook

EVERY party organisation in the Soviet Union has its Party Secretary. He transmits the Party policy to his organisation as he receives it from higher echelons of the Party. He supervises his own organisation in accordance with this policy, and serves as the Party's link with the masses, especially at the level of the primary, the district, and the city organisations. He is, perhaps, the key figure in Soviet life.

What kind of person should a Party Secretary be? The Soviet novel from 1945 to the present day provides an unambiguous answer. In most of these novels he appears as a type—clearly defined and easily recognisable, although there are some deviations that will be worth noticing. Once the type is established, the significance of the deviations from it will be made clear.

Leadership is the quality authors emphasise in the Party Secretary. Nearly always he is shown with people over whom he is in authority. Rarely is he represented as a subordinate, even when meeting with a Party Secretary of a higher organisation than his own. This quality of leadership is deliberately constructed from certain recurrent elements, the first of which is physical appearance. Physical appearance within the type is not uniform, but its delineations give a uniform impression—one of force and insight. Striking, piercing eyes are a familar feature, and the portrait as a whole might be described as that of a 'leader of the people.'

Perceptiveness and personal sympathy are indispensable to the fictional Party Secretary. He has an intuitive grasp of people's personal problems, and takes a personal interest in them. In so doing, he displays impressive knowledge and vision.

The type normally exercises firm control over his own emotions (occasionally he is just plain inscrutable). But usually his great joy of living and involvement in his work are uppermost. They drive him on steadily in his determined tasks. This devotion to his job is reinforced by a built-in sense of responsibility and the habit of leadership. Geniality and friendliness in him are tempered with a firmness born of the necessity to lead the advance towards the specific goals of the Party.

Occasionally he is afflicted with what would be called in Western novels 'the loneliness of command,' the result of a hard family life, long hours of work, protracted absences from home, and the constant sense of urgency and crisis that infects his labours. The great personal sacrifices he often makes for the sake of his Party work are made willingly.

In spite of his hard personal lot and exacting daily routine, the Party Secretary type retains the same attitude towards work that he has towards life, a positive and enthusiastic one, because, especially for this type of Soviet man, his work is his life. He brings to it a front-line attitude and a sense of power. The enemy is uncontrolled nature, whose allies are men harbouring 'capitalist survivals' in their consciousness.

Within the collective struggle, the Party Secretary still encourages and praises individual successes and skills. The need for trained workers dictates a positive and practical attitude towards study and culture. He is constantly urging people of all ages in his organisation to study, although usually in a technical and limited field, for example, agronomy, tractor-driving, animal husbandry, or lathe operation. That the Party Secretary is most concerned with political education probably goes without

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saying. He is normally shown to have a great thirst for books and an interest in art because of its ability to influence people; and he, too, studies as much as possible.

The Party Secretary in these novels understands the work problems of his organisation's members because he is himself a worker. He is technically proficient, and, in the primary Party organisations, works at a job as well as being Party Secretary. In higher Party echelons he reveals his practical knowledge, and often asks technical questions of baffled workers in the Socratic manner; their answers then help them to see their tasks more clearly.

Most often, however, the Secretary prefers more forceful methods. The agitator is the modern gadfly—an adept at exhortation, inspirational meetings, public addresses, publicity campaigns, and work challenges. His criticism is as frank and open as his agitation, and although normally quite sharp in tone, it is in this criticism that the Party Secretary is most inclined to use ironic humour as a stimulant.

The virtue called 'Party tact' is the quality of using absolute truth and frankness in delivering constructive criticism. More laudable, however, than receiving criticism in a true Party spirit is the ability to criticise one's self. Oddly enough, the Party Secretary is rarely depicted applying self-criticism, but is frequently heard recommending its practice to someone else. When he does apply it, the Secretary's offence is either a peccadillo or an error shared by a whole group.

Although the type is a worker or ex-worker and has the common touch, he is still the object of special respect. He has both earned it by his knowledge and work, and been given it as a result of his official position. He is constantly asked for personal and technical advice. From his position he teaches others the Communist way and trains new Party members, by example as much as by precept.

The Party Secretary serves as the driving force in Soviet society by example, by agitation, by personal help, and by planning. Azhayev, in *Far From Moscow,* characterises the Party Secretary as the conscience of Soviet man. The object for which the Party Secretary works is to gain effective mass support for the Party and its programme. *Harvest,* by Nikolaeva, and *Fleetfooted Deer,* by Shundik, give a detailed exposition of the type's qualities of leadership —physical and emotional strength, sympathy, insight, devotion, a positive attitude towards work and study, technical proficiency, activity as an agitator, teacher, and guide, and a gift for the constructive use of criticism and self-criticism. *Light Over The Earth,* by Babaevsky, *Heart and Soul,* by Maltsev, and *Floating Stanitsa,* by Zakrutin, show the type clearly, but in somewhat less detail. The Party Secretary is not usually the leading character in a novel, but in *Harvest* a married couple who are both Party Secretaries are major figures, and in *Fleetfooted Deer* the Party Secretary is the leading character. A concise portrait of the type is found in *Apsheron,* by Hussein, in which the Party Secretary, though present only on nine pages of the novel, embodies every important element of the type. In many novels the Party Secretary, as a minor character, presents only a few typical features. These figures do not depart from the type; they are merely fragments of it.

The Party Secretary's relationship with superiors is described in a scene in *Apsheron* as being that with 'an intimate older friend.' His Party feeling of loyalty and 'togetherness' is not called into doubt, but it is not emphasised so much as his rôle of leader. He submits to orders and adheres to policy voluntarily. 'The plan' and his will are inseparable. He is shown directing the execution of the plan, not criticising or revising it. The actual process of making policy is not described in the novels of the period from 1945. Subordination of the Party Secretary to higher authority is obscured by his leadership activities in carrying out Party policy. The discipline and subordination demanded of him as a Party member account for roughly ten per cent of the total space devoted to portraying the type in the novels upon which this article is based. The other ninety per cent refer to leadership and its tributary qualities.

It is not without interest to examine, in this connection, *The Rules of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,* section I, paragraph 3;

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

duties of a Party member. Paraphrased and condensed, they are as follows: (a) defend the Party's unity, (b) be an active fighter for carrying out Party decisions, (c) set an example in work, (d) strengthen ties with the masses, (e) increase one's own knowledge of Marxism-Leninism, (f) observe Party discipline, (g) develop self-criticism and criticism from below, (h) inform Party leaders of shortcomings in work, (i) be honest with the Party, (j) guard Party secrets, (k) observe the Party's injunctions on selection of personnel. Here the stress falls on obedience and discipline. The stress in the literary type of the Party Secretary falls on his leadership and initiative. Authors underline his capabilities rather than his limitations. It is this *special* obligation to lead that sets the Party Secretary apart from the rank-and-file Party members, and this is the distinctive characteristic of the literary type.

The Party Secretary is also used as a literary device. From his special position he cuts administrative Gordian knots which threaten the work of the main characters, and in such novels as *Floating Stanitsa, Living Water,* by Kozhevnikov, *Students,* by Trifonov, and *Those Who Seek,* by Granin, he serves as a *deus ex machina.*

Of forty-one Party Secretaries noted in 23 selected novels written since 1945, ranging from fully portrayed characters to those mentioned only casually, 13 Secretaries show some noticeable variation from the type.

The largest group of variants are those who are ugly or in poor physical condition. Dudin, in *Far From Moscow,* is 'corpulent, though still young.' Savin, in *Those Who Seek,* has the 'unhealthy corpulence of a man obliged to lead a sedentary life.' Borisov, from the same novel, has an inexpressive face, no eyebrows, and a potato nose. He is saved from complete ugliness by his bright blue eyes, which shine with 'a kind of joyful eagerness.' In *Kruzhilika,* by Panova, Makarov is drawn with 'clever, slightly malicious eyes.' He is stooped and seems small, and has the 'well-kept hands of a man who has not done manual work for a long time.' In the cases of Dudin, Savin, and Makarov, these bad features are shown as their only faults.

Another variation from the type is the Party Secretary who goes wrong at his work through lack of experience. This classification includes Bekishev, in *Bright Shore,* by Panova. He feeds some cattle incorrectly, thus showing himself to be a better Party Secretary than a farmer, but redeems himself by work and study. Potato-nosed Borisov's path is harder than Bekishev's, because Borisov is inexperienced in Party work itself. Lacking confidence, he is often ineffectual, and is easily deceived, but by the end of *Those Who Seek* he has mastered his shortcomings and evolved squarely into the regular Party Secretary type. This is the only example of such gradual development shown in the 23 novels mentioned.

If Borisov and Bekishev faltered through inexperience, Korytov, in Pavlenko's *Happiness,* does so through too much experience. Overworked, he is presented as played-out in his job. Strain shows in his repellent face, which is sallow, wrinkled, and sickly. But finally assistance comes, both physical and moral, and enables him to carry on without succumbing to his impulse to become a phrasemonger and a bureaucrat.

Zorin, in *Those Who Seek,* is a Party Secretary who does not want to be one. He would prefer to devote himself to full-time engineering and drop Party work. Out of apathy he loses his authority to a scheming careerist.

In contrast to Zorin, the only fault ascribed to Andrey, in *Harvest,* is his too impetuous and unrelenting driving power. For a moment he indulges in selfish thoughts, when his wife chooses to continue her Party activities at the expense of their home-life, but both Andrey and his wife are dedicated to the Party, and resolve the dilemma in favour of Party activity.

Problems of physical well-being, experience, and motivation involve the lesser deviations from the type. Major catastrophe has befallen the Party Secretary who becomes a bureaucrat. Julian H. Franklin, in his article *The Democratic Approach to Bureaucracy,* suggests that bureaucratic behaviour is characterised by a depersonalisation of authority, with decisions becoming routine, habitual responses. Franklin writes: 'The opposite of bureaucratic behaviour is discretionary, creative choice, ideally the monopoly

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the political authority.' The Party Secretary is a representative of political authority, and within the limits of Party policy can act or forcefully recommend action to others. Since as a type he is presented as sympathetic and personally involved with others in order to aid them in their work for new and rapid results, ideal behaviour for the Party Secretary would be the opposite of bureaucratic.

In Chakovsky's novel, *A Year of Life,* the hero has to sneak into the Regional Party Secretary's office in order to get to see the Secretary. He is then dryly reproved by the Secretary, who declines to consider his request for better workers' housing because it is an economic matter and the Secretary is a political official. Throughout the novel there are disparaging references to bureaucrats, and when Baulin, the Regional Party Secretary, suddenly reconsiders the question and pushes through approval for the new housing, he explains that he is 'not such a bureaucrat as all that.' Baulin had been in danger of becoming a bureaucrat through thoughtlessness, but caught himself in time. Chakovsky follows this up with a speech in which one character condemns a hypothetical Party Secretary whose vision is limited to his superiors, to the letter of the law, who lives by bureaucracy.

A Year's Span, by Panova, depicts a Party Secretary who has become a fully-fledged bureaucrat. Golovanov is an ordinary middle-aged man, good-hearted and ashamed, who, having been removed from his post, sincerely admits his fault and expresses remorse. Power had corrupted him. While he was Party Secretary Golovanov put on airs of importance, so that no one could get to see him. He was accused of riding too often in an official automobile, and basking in the respect shown him, which was really intended for the party he represented. Golovanov's speech had turned into the mouthing of commonplaces.

Another who became a bureaucrat is Kovalevsky, a second Secretary of the District Party Committee in *Those Who Seek.* He slights petitioners and avoids responsibility. A one-sentence allusion is made to a certain Ivan Ivanovich in *Light Over The Earth,* showing him to have been a bureaucrat and careerist of the same type. The passages dealing with Kovalevsky and Golovanov are also quite brief, though vivid.

Skorobogatov, from Koptaeva's *Ivan Ivanovich,* is the most completely portrayed atypical Party Secretary. He is shown to have given valued service to the Party in the past, but in the novel he appears throughout as a completely negative man. 'Keenly conscious of his own superiority,' and habitually domineering, Skorobogatov is rude, tactless, supercilious, technically ignorant, and thoroughly disliked by the people. He is fat and has ugly eyes. He threatens. He goes to extremes in behaviour and falls behind the times. Opposition to himself, Skorobogatov interprets as opposition to the Party and declares that his job is to 'penetrate into the very essence of a person's soul, not his work.' Without doing anything to help other people in their work, either with thought, money, or materials, Skorobogatov (which means 'get rich quick') attempts to meddle in their private lives. He is, above all, unjustly suspicious of everyone. When charges are at last preferred against him for his ruinous practices he is genuinely surprised ; so out of touch with the masses has he become. Skorobogatov has gone to the very worst limit and is branded as a dictator. As a literary figure he is not particularly interesting. There is nothing good about him and he is as incomplete a personality as the Party Secretary type who has nothing bad about him. Koptaeva makes no attempt to explain or comprehend his character ; she gives no hint of how Skorobogatov became such a villain, but is most concerned to judge him, and carefully points out that Skorobogatov is only 'a tiny dot' on the enormous surface of the Party. The interesting thing about Skorobogatov is that a Soviet writer finds it necessary to recognise the possibility of his existence.

In all cases considered here where a Party Secretary has gone wrong, the authors have dramatised his exposure or reform, usually by the hand of another and senior Party Secretary.

Significant as the antithesis of the Party Secretary type is a Chukchi shaman drawn by Shundik in *Fleetfooted Deer.* This superstitious

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

old witch-doctor attempts to dominate his people by fear, and to murder their Party Secretary. He dies in a fit, after an excess of rage and superstitious fanaticism.

Panova, Chakovsky, Granin, Koptaeva, and Pavlenko are the writers who have dealt most extensively with atypical Party Secretaries. On the whole, they do at least attempt a full psychological portrayal of their characters more often than the authors of such works as *Far From Moscow, Light Over The Earth,* or *Light in Koordi.* In these last three works the figures are flat and uncomplicated. Psychological complexity, on the other hand, is characteristic of the literary method of Panova particularly, of Chakovsky and Granin to a large degree, and also of Koptaeva (notwithstanding Skorobogatov's flatness), and of Pavlenko to a lesser extent. Of the novels dealing with atypical Party Secretaries, the best, artistically, have appeared since Stalin's death. These are *A Year's Span* (1954), *Those Who Seek* (1955), and *A Year of Life* (1956). Here the characters—not only of Party Secretaries—are more fully delineated. Ideologically they attack nothing that Pavlenko did not attack in *Happiness* (1947), that is, bureaucracy, and their remedies are the same way, that is, other Party members, other Secretaries, and self-criticism. The distinction of Panova, Granin, and Chakovsky is that their work is better literature. They present no brief against the Party and its Secretaries in their novels, but rather against bureaucratic corruptions of them. Bureaucracy is apparently recognised as the chief occupational hazard of the Party Secretary's job, and the purpose of presenting atypical Party Secretaries in novels is to alert others to the danger, and so help them to avoid it.

The type of the Party Secretary has been consistent and persistent in novels since 1945. It appears to resist literary change, and no variant Party Secretary is left uncorrected at a novel's end. He is, after all, the pillar of society and Soviet Ibsens, exposing the pillars and undermining society, are clearly unwanted.

BRIEF INTERLUDE

Alfred Burmeister

THE relative freedom that prevailed in the Soviet Union for a few brief months—from shortly before the twentieth party congress to shortly thereafter—gave a few Soviet writers the opportunity to rediscover man, with his hopes and sorrows. No more than a few stories and poems had been published when for the first time readers began to seize eagerly on the literary journals which had bored them for so long, and had now found the courage to publish these new ventures. The public crowded to the evening meetings devoted to the discussion of these publications and quickly bought up the all-too-few copies in which they were issued. An art annihilated by Stalinism appeared about to be reborn.

The dream did not last long. No sooner had it appeared than Dudintsev's book was condemned; no sooner published than the works of the young poets were ordered to be rewritten. Now, as before, the party decides what is art; one year after the twentieth congress Khrushchev announced that it is to have no existence outside party policy, and his words were underlined by weighty threats. His speech in May, 1957, at a gathering of prominent Soviet writers was published in *Kommunist* and *Pravda* in July, after the demotion of Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, and Shepilov, as Khrushchev's first 'ideological' pronouncement. In September and October all the literary periodicals reproduced the speech.

Anyone who reads the few literary works against which Khrushchev thundered might be tempted to say that the attack on the 'intellectual ferment' was more powerful than the fer-

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment itself. But however weakly the protest of violated art was delineated, in comparison, say, with what happened in Hungary and Poland, it still appeared to Khrushchev to endanger his plans. What was encouraging was that it was young writers and poets who made the literary history of the past year. This permits the hope that in the long run their voices cannot be silenced.

Victor Starikov's tale, *The Generous Heart*, is short and perhaps not even particularly well written. There was nothing out of the ordinary in its publication in No. 6 of the new literary periodical *Moskva*. Starikov himself, born in 1910, has trodden the familiar path of a Soviet journalist, with in addition a few more or less mediocre books to his credit, mostly collections of reportage. Nevertheless, entirely fresh tones ring through his story. In it things are said which hitherto it had been impossible even to hint at though they had been hovering in the air for years (and once spoken they started the alarm bells ringing in the apparatus).

The story is directed against the glorification of those heroes who put their life at hazard for the sake of the plan, against that particularly marked feature of Stalinism which rated the cause (the party, the plan, the State) higher than the lives of individual human beings. Starikov's hero is a factory director who has just died, and whose body is being carried to the grave by his colleagues and subordinates. Constantly under attack from his superiors and from many of those present, he had valued the man more than the plan, held a man's life dearer than a machine's. Pavel Longinov, one of the workmen, had been acclaimed as a 'patriotic hero of labour' for having crept inside a still glowing furnace to clear up some damage that might have interfered with the fulfilment of the factory's plan. It is true that his health suffered, but the factory came out first in the competition. At the time of this incident the director had been absent. On his return he had sent for the workman, arranged for a medical examination, and had him sent off to convalesce; the shop foreman who had permitted this 'act of heroism' he reprimanded.

'Understand me,' director Sotnikov said to the workman. 'What you did has been called a heroic act, and it really was a great feat. But I think it was taking an unnecessary risk. Was it really necessary to crawl into that inferno, to risk your life? . . . You must understand . . . . You can build a machine, a bridge, a factory, a road. But a man has only one life, and it must be watched over. If you lose only one day of your life, there is no power on earth that can give it back to you. To risk your life for another life, that I can understand. . . . But to go into the furnace in order that the plan can be fulfilled ahead of time! . . . No good engineer would allow that.'

He had been peculiar in other ways, too, this director, as the mourners now remember. He had planted flowers in the factory grounds, and put up fine streetlamps in the workers' settlement. He himself had been reprimanded on a number of occasions; he had aroused the hostility of the authorities who accused him of paying more attention to these trifles than to the plan. Now that his generous heart was still, the factory workers and engineers recall him with sorrow.

That is the entire story, a few pages which show the direction of the thoughts and feelings of writers striving after truth. The reviewers accused Starikov of libelling Soviet factory directors. The writer who was pleading for greater humanity was charged with denigrating the heroic sacrifices made by the workers for a better life.

In *The Levers* Alexander Yashin went further. It is a satire on how party work transforms living people into soulless automata, how they mechanically carry out orders like cogs in a huge machine, unable to exercise their own knowledge or judgment. The story, astonishingly true in tone and feeling, was published in *Literaturnaya Moskva* early in 1957; it presents four men, the leading members of a collective farm, talking intimately together. They speak slowly, as peasants do, and make fun of the district party secretary who is making nonsensical demands on them. He expects them to act as the 'levers of the party in the village.'

Then a curious change comes over them; they are joined by the teacher, the fifth party member in the village, and the party meeting begins.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They conduct it according to the same rites as the district party secretary uses in the town. They become official, and their speech loses all touch with real life. What they had just rejected as impossible and contrary to the peasants' interests now becomes a 'necessary party measure' which must be 'worked through' and 'executed.' They have in fact turned into the levers which the district party secretary wanted them to be. Their humanity vanishes the moment the chairman, until then a simple upright man, opens the meeting with the ritual phrase. Only after the meeting, when they turn homewards along the dark, muddy village street, they take up once more the conversation about their lives, their work, their worries, the conversation they were having before the meeting. 'And again they were plain, cheerful, upright men. Men and not levers.' That is how Yashin ends his story. He must have regretted it since, at the innumerable meetings at which it was attacked, condemned, outlawed.

Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone,* which served as the starting point for Khrushchev's attack on the writers, was not the first and not the only work to take a critical attitude towards Soviet society. The great gulf between kolkhoz peasants and party officials was vividly suggested in *A Visit Home,* published in the same number of *Literaturnaya Moskva.* The author, N. Zhdanov, describes how a busy official returns to his native village to attend his mother's funeral. It is many years since he has been there, and the village has changed greatly. But the villagers are living in unimaginable poverty and the visitor is deeply depressed, most of all when one of the women of the kolkhoz, half apologetically and half pleading for understanding, describes the distress in the village to one who, as 'a man from the centre,' in a certain sense shares the responsibility.

'I wanted to ask you,' she says, 'have they done right by us here? This year we sowed 74 acres with hemp. It was just ready when the summer wheat also got ripe for cutting. We should have mowed it, but they ordered us to thresh the grain deliveries and take it to the collection centre. You know, if you don't do the hemp in time, you lose it, but they wouldn't listen to us; they wanted their deliveries and that was that. We asked ourselves, can't our state wait seven days? We wouldn't have fallen behind, but we couldn't do anything with them. . . . And so we lost the hemp. They wrote our deliveries down right—we're among the top. But now we've no bread again. Now tell me, is that good or not?'

'She thinks it all depends on me,' Varygin thought in despair, and tried to remember what had happened. But he could recall nothing. 'That is a political question,' he says loudly. 'The state must always come first. Everything depends on the level of consciousness of the masses.' He is not satisfied with his explanation, but the peasant woman listens with a pleased look on her face. 'She's happy because the conversation has reached a high level.' At this level the officials live in a world of injustice, cut off from the misery of the people. No sooner has Zhdanov's hero come into contact with that world than he seeks to escape it. After barely a day in the village that has become so frighteningly alien to him he leaves, and only in the train on the way back to Moscow does he feel himself again. He thinks of his warm, well-equipped office. 'But for a long time Varygin did not lose a sense of guilt. He could not fall asleep, and as he dozed he saw wooden crosses against a grey sky, the familiar house, a long wooden bench by the wall and in the corner the old samovar that leaned slightly to one side. His mother sat at the table, her face small and dark as it had been when he saw it in the church; she bent towards him, expectant and hopeful, and asked, as the soldier's wife had done, "Have they done right by us here?" '

Social disparities in the Soviet state are reflected also in a third story published in the same journal, Yuri Nagibin's *The Light in the Window.* In a convalescent home a suite of rooms has for years been kept in readiness for a 'very important person' who never comes. Day after day the rooms are thoroughly cleaned by a woman specially engaged for the job; even when the home is full the rooms are not used. One fine day the cleaning woman breaks the strict regulations. She and the porter and his children sit down in the luxurious room and turn on the new television set, to the speechless horror of the director, who observes them

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through the window. In a single act of indiscipline she has swept aside the invisible but unsurmountable barriers erected between 'them' and the people. That cannot be allowed, and the poet who thought that it could has had to repent.

It was the thaw which prompted him and the others to say things that had been lying in their hearts for years, things that touched and moved the people, and that they had to express if they were to fulfil in some degree the age-old function of the artist to serve as spokesman for the people. In the months of the thaw the opportunity was there, and it was seized with hope. The atmosphere is suggested most clearly in Galina Nikolaeva's novel *Bitva v puti* (The battle on the road), which appeared as a serial in *Oktyabr* between March and July. Nikolaeva, who had always adhered to the party line, presents a panorama of post-Stalinist development; the story opens with his funeral and ends in 1957, before the downfall of the Molotov group. Much that could be said when she wrote it could no longer be said after it appeared, and that is why it has been attacked. The spirit in which it is written does not suggest a craving for freedom; her book merely reproduces the thoughts stirring in Soviet society at that time; it is neither her merit nor her fault that it was precisely these ideas that preoccupied people in the party machine, in industry, and in the administration.

It seems a wholly sincere book; the varnish is scarcely perceptible, and even Stalin's funeral, with which it opens, does not appear as a retrospective obeisance to the dead dictator, as some commentators have suggested. It is curiosity, and not sorrow, that draws the crowds to the hall where the body is lying. Unmistakable, too, is the confusion within the party and among the higher party officials. 'What will happen? What will it be like without him?' Nikolaeva describes what people thought was going to happen—everything was going to be much, much better. All the questions that Soviet life put to them are there—the terror of the police régime, children growing up without parental love, bad kolkhoz chairmen and the party's mistakes in agriculture and industry, the hostility between the centre and the localities, between the worker and the factory manager, the antagonism between town and country, manual and white-collar worker. The theme of the terror is treated more boldly than in earlier Soviet literature: the cold-shouldering of the wife of the arrested man and her descent in society has not been delineated so sharply even in books published outside Russia, and in drawing this picture Nikolaeva has, consciously or not, revealed the differences in rank in Soviet society. It was not easy to attack her book, for every bad official is counterbalanced by a good one. Is it 'nihilism' or 'denigration' when the heroine, brought up in luxury, despises her friends of yesterday because they turn away from her arrested father and cling to the fleshpots? The heroine herself remains 'positive' to the end. She wavers in her faith in the party and State which permitted this crime, but recovers and remains firm. The reader may be astonished, but Nikolaeva does not enter into any of the internal struggles of her heroine. 'The world of justice, the world which they both loved so much, where has it gone? And did it ever exist?' These are Tina's only words of doubt, and once Beria has been removed all is once again clear and bright.

In the factory where Tina works the duel between her friend, the chief engineer, and the factory director reflects clearly the conflict between local managers and officials at the centre, and the more or less unrestricted power of the factory director. In the end, of course, the good chief engineer triumphs, as he has done in all novels of socialist-realism in the past. But the machine is so disastrous, the victory so dearly bought, that the reader cannot help shuddering. And the Soviet reader, presented with a director who, in order to earn a premium, continues to turn out faulty tractors that then lie about useless in the fields, or cheats an inventor of the payment due to him, must ask what distinguishes these men from private factory owners. In connexion with the inventor, Nikolaeva does indeed let her workers begin some kind of protest action. An old worker reminds the younger ones that they are, after all, 'masters of the factories'; the day of the 'bosses' is past. The youngsters do not, of course, go on strike, nor even call a protest meeting; they take their complaint to the party bureau,

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which at its next meeting replaces the bad director by the good engineer. And so on.

These are the battles on the road, a road that, according to Galina Nikolaeva, is so difficult because the goal to which it leads is so great. She does not ask whether perhaps it is not the right road; she does not criticise the system, but only individuals and their failure to live up to a great ideal. After forty years, the road has led to a society where the workers have to be reminded that they are the masters, where their well-being hangs on the goodness or badness of a director, where there is no social power, no trade union, and no law strong enough to protect them from his arbitrariness.

With the rediscovery of man the world of feeling again took its place in art. To love and be loved is now no longer a forbidden exercise in Soviet writing, and particularly in poetry. In Nikolaeva's novel the love is, indeed, extra-marital, and the fact that it has a tragic end does not make it a less uncommon event in the Soviet literature of the last twenty years.

Love, fortunate and unfortunate, frank and brutal and romantically tenacious, dominates the work of the young poets, but it is not this that makes their verse exciting. In the last year a number of poems have been published which bear no trace of the customary socialist-realism and party spirit. They betray instead a passion for truth, a contempt for empty gestures and cowardly silence, a deep sorrow for the harshness and injustices of life. There were not very many, and they have since been condemned as a 'bad example,' but they restored belief in a revival of poetry in the USSR and aroused hopes of a new day.

Be silent, night. You cannot cry down
The dawn which now lightens half the heaven.
He who conceals his sickness must die.
You say that in your light the dirt cannot be seen?
We want to see it.
Do you hear? It is time.

These are lines from a poem by Rozhdestvenski. What inspired him and the others was the desire to expose the sickness, to speak out honestly at last. Even in *Day of Poetry,* an otherwise not very satisfactory anthology which appeared at the end of 1956, the desperate call for honesty can be heard, while Evtushenko's poems reveal such a profound despair that there can be no doubt about the spiritual state of the young generation, which the central committee of the party has described as extremely 'nihilistic.' The young poets are under attack. They will be silenced, and poetry will again wither, or be driven underground.

But can poetry be altogether suppressed in Russia? Ilya Ehrenburg told a Polish correspondent how well known banned poets are in the USSR. Pasternak, who had published nothing for years, appeared one evening at a public meeting arranged in his honour by some friends, and recited poems which he had never published but which had been passed around in manuscript among his friends. Occasionally he halted, uncertain of the words, and each time the next line was whispered by the audience. His poems, though unpublished, were known. Will the same not happen to Evtushenko's poetry, and the poetry of many, many young writers who have not yet published anything?

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM AND NATURAL SCIENCE

Gustav Wetter, S.J.

THE launching of the two Sputniks has impressively demonstrated to the western world the considerable progress that has taken place in Soviet natural science and technology during the last few years. But the Russians themselves are concerned to establish a causal connection between this success and the superiority of Soviet ideology and of the Soviet social structure. This is not the place for an appreciation of the successes of Soviet technology from a purely specialised point of view; nor can we attempt to investigate the conditions favouring such achievements which may inhere in the Soviet social structure. We propose, rather, to examine the extent to which such successes may properly be regarded as proof of the superiority of Soviet ideology, and, more generally, the nature of the relationship between philosophy and natural science in the Soviet Union in the recent past.

In the years between the end of the Second World War and the death of Stalin Soviet cultural and scientific life was dominated by the requirements of the struggle against 'cosmopolitanism' and against 'abasement before bourgeois culture.' Soviet scientists were concerned above all to assert the pre-eminence of Soviet culture in all fields and to depreciate western achievements accordingly. After Stalin's death a marked change took place in this respect. The Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU declared in July, 1955, that this disdainful attitude towards the achievements of western science and technology had had an adverse effect on the Soviet Union, and demanded instead a thorough exploitation of the principal achievements of capitalist science and technology in the interests of building up Communism. However, this decision did not initiate a reorientation of Soviet science, but merely gave official sanction to tendencies which were already in full swing and which, indeed, had in part begun even before Stalin's death. Nor did this reorientation affect all fields of science equally. Philosophically, the main effort was directed at showing that the discoveries of modern science confirmed the truth of dialectical materialism and at removing the objections against this system which might arise from those discoveries.

The reorientation of Soviet natural science and philosophy of science was most clearly manifested in the field of relativity theory. Until recent years Soviet philosophy regarded the theory of relativity with mistrust and frequently even rejected it outright; the slogan of a 'reactionary Einsteinianism' was coined. The reason was that the theory of relativity had revealed facts which appeared to be incompatible with dialectical materialism; for example, the relativity of length, of time, even of simultaneity. Thus, the physical length of a moving body and the physical duration of events taking place in this body are claimed to have different values for an observer moving with the body and an observer remaining outside the body, *i.e.* lengths and periods are dependent on the point of view chosen. It might even happen, therefore, that events which appear simultaneous within one moving frame of reference no longer appear so when observed from another vantage point. In rejecting the theory of relativity the Soviets even went so far as to attack not only Einstein's relativity theory but also, in practice, the principle of relativity established by Galileo, which states, for example, that there is no absolute path traversed by a falling body, and that it is as true to say that a stone falling from a moving train travels in a straight line (with reference to the moving system 'train') as it is to say that it describes a parabola (with reference to the referential system 'a pointsman standing outside the train').

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But all this, and much else besides, seemed to Soviet philosophers to contradict the objectivity of knowledge required by dialectical materialism. The arguments advanced against the theory of relativity, however, are often of an extremely primitive and unsophisticated nature. For example, A. A. Maksimov claimed to demonstrate the absoluteness of the line of flight by the fact that a meteorite falling to earth bores a hole in the earth's surface whose shape copies that of the line of flight.[1] In similar fashion he defended the absoluteness of simultaneity and of measurements of length and time.

But a reaction against this unintelligent kind of rejection of relativity theory set in even during Stalin's lifetime. It was urgently necessary to adopt a different attitude towards relativity theory if only for the reason that the special theory of relativity, at least, had been spectacularly proved experimentally; for the whole of modern atomic physics is unthinkable without the special theory of relativity, particularly without the 'principle of energy inertia' (expressed in the formula $E=mc^2$) derived from it. For this reason the Soviet learned journal *Voprosy filosofii* (Problems of Philosophy) launched a discussion of relativity theory as early as 1951. It dragged on for four years and was not concluded until long after Stalin's death in the editorial summary printed in the first number for 1955. The day had been won by those Soviet physicists and philosophers who were concerned to arrive at a juster appraisal of the theory of relativity. Maksimov was accused of a 'vulgarising' attitude which had led him to 'nihilistic views on one of the most important theories of modern physics.'[2] Maksimov's chief opponents were the two Leningrad mathematicians V. A. Fok and A. D. Aleksandrov. It was their philosophical interpretation of relativity theory which now became more or less the official point of view, and it was they who wrote the article on the theory of relativity for the second edition of the *Large Soviet Encyclopedia.*

This interpretation starts from the assumption that the theory of relativity is essentially a physical and not a purely mathematical theory. Its essential teaching is that space and time are to be regarded as interdependent entities, or, in the language of dialectical materialism, not as independent 'manifestations of matter' but as a single manifestation, space-time. Taken separately, space and time are relative but nonetheless objective aspects of the single absolute space-time. The confusion in the minds of many of the writers who had taken part in the discussions was attributed to the fact that 'relative' had often been taken to mean 'not objective.' The decomposition of the space-time continuum into the two separate components space and time is determined not absolutely but only in relation to this or that referential system.[3]

In interpreting the theories of modern physics dialectical materialism makes a point of safeguarding the objective existence of the real world and of avoiding any hypothesis which would entail the assumption of a contribution of the knowing subject to physical reality. This 'realistic' preoccupation is revealed again in the definition of the 'referential system,' a fundamental concept of relativity theory. Aleksandrov resists any conception of it as a fictional or notional system of co-ordinates which the observer merely imputes to the outside world in his thinking, as with Eddington. Aleksandrov sees the referential system as something objectively given, namely, the objective and real co-ordination of the objects and events in the world which are all related to each other in the most various ways. Any body whatsoever may therefore function as a referential system.[4]

As regards the general theory of relativity, this had its origin in the fact that Einstein extended the principle of relativity, which in the special theory of relativity had been restricted to systems moving uniformly and in a straight line, to systems undergoing acceleration and moving in circles with respect to one another. The Soviet interpretation, however, refuses to regard this generalisation of the relativity principle as the essence of the general

[1] *Voprosy Filosofii*, 1948, No. 3, p. 114.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1955, No. 1, p. 136.

[3] Cf. *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopedia*, Vol. 31, p. 411.

[4] *Voprosy Filosofii*, 1953, No. 5, p. 227.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

theory of relativity, which it sees, rather, in the discovery that the space-time continuum is not homogeneous and therefore not always subject to the Euclidean system of measurement, but dependent for its system of measurement, instead, on the distribution and motion of matter.[5]

Beyond safeguarding a realistic view of the world, Soviet scholars in their philosophical interpretation of the theory of relativity pursued two other aims of an even more clearly ideological nature. The first concerns the question of a geocentric or a heliocentric conception of the universe. From Einstein's extension, in the general theory of relativity, of the relativity principle to referential systems under acceleration and in circular motion with respect to one another, it would follow that all referential systems in the world were of equal value. In one sense, therefore—a narrow sense, to be sure—it might be said that the quarrel between Ptolemy and Copernicus had become meaningless in that 'both are equally right.' The Soviet philosophers, however, advocate the anachronistic opinion that a religious view of the world stands or falls with the geocentric system, and for this reason they will not allow this corollary of the theory of relativity.[6]

Their second aim is likewise ideological in its motive. Einstein, with the aid of an auxiliary hypothesis, drew the further corollary from the general theory of relativity that the universe, because of the curvature of space, is unlimited but not infinite, a three-dimensional version of the fact that the surface of a globe is unlimited but finite. But for the Soviet philosophers the spatial finiteness of the universe seems also to entail a temporal beginning and therefore a creation of the world. This, however, would violate one of the principal theses of dialectical materialism, according to which the material universe is infinite in both space and time ; and for this reason Soviet philosophers consistently strive to amend Einstein on this score too.

The situation is somewhat different in the field of the philosophical interpretation of quantum physics. Whereas in their treatment of relativity theory Soviet scholars were concerned to revise their own outdated opinions, in the field of quantum physics their attitude *vis-à-vis* western physics is a much more confident one. This is one of the principal fields where Soviet philosophy considers dialectical materialism to provide a working instrument enabling Soviet physicists to do fruitful work. Their main concern is to refute certain positivistic and idealistic interpretations of the facts of quantum physics put forward by western physicists. Their chief opponents in this respect are the so-called 'Copenhagen School' (Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg, and others). First of all they attack the principle of 'complementarity' advanced by this school[7]; secondly, the concept of a 'physical reality' constituted in part by the observing subject, which is rejected as 'idealistic'; last, but not least, the Copenhagen School is attacked for denying the validity of the law of causality in the field of micro-physics.

The basic mistake of the Copenhagen School, according to the Soviet philosophers, consists in their regarding the wave function which characterises the conditions of micro-phenomena not as an objective characteristic of those phenomena themselves but only as an expression of the 'knowledge of the observer.[8] So far as the wave-particle duality is concerned the Copenhagen School does not see in the wave a real property of the micro-phenomenon itself, but regards it as a 'probability wave,' *i.e.* as nothing but the expression of the probability of finding a micro-phenomenon (*e.g.*, an electron), conceived of exclusively as a particle, in a given place.[9]

The most authoritative voice among the Soviet interpreters of quantum physics appears to be that of the Director of the United Institute for Nuclear Research and leader of the Soviet delegation to the Geneva atomic conference of 1956, D. I. Blokhintsev. His theory starts from

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

[6] Cf. A. I. Uemov, 'Geliotsentricheskaya sistema Kopernika i teoriya otnositelnosti,' in *Filosofskie voprosy sovremennoi fiziki,* Moscow, 1952, p. 310.

[7] Cf. M. E. Omelyanovski, 'Dialekticheskii materializm i tak nazyvaemy printsip dopolnitelnosti Bora,' in *Filosofskie voprosy sovremennoi fiziki.*

[8] D. I. Blokhintsev, *Grundlagen der Quantenmechanik,* Berlin, 1953, p. 499.

[9] Omelyanovski, *loc. cit.*, p. 401.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the assumption that the wave function is not to be related directly to the behaviour of any one micro-phenomenon, but that it determines, in the first place, the behaviour of a so-called 'ensemble.' Only by way of this ensemble can the physicist, in principle, derive knowledge concerning the behaviour of the several particles. In this way Blokhintsev believes it to be possible to make meaningful assertions about the properties of micro-phenomena as well. Their most fundamental property is that they partake equally of the characteristics of particles and of waves; and therefore the concept of motion along a given path cannot be applied to micro-phenomena.[10] Other Soviet scholars, however, above all the above-mentioned Leningrad mathematician Fok, reject Blokhintsev's theory of ensembles.[11]

Another much-discussed subject is the problem of determinism or indeterminism in the light of quantum physics. On this point Soviet scholars in general, and not only the school of Blokhintsev, staunchly defend philosophical determinism, despite the indeterminism of quantum physics expressed by Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy; although, to be sure, in order to avoid misunderstandings, they emphasise that their determinism is not to be equated with determinism in the sense of Laplace, which excludes all chance happenings. In this connection Soviet physicists and philosophers appeal to the doctrine of dialectical materialism, according to which necessity and chance do not represent two mutually exclusive categories, but which holds, rather, that necessity makes its way through a multitude of accidents.[12] They do not, however, attempt any further philosophical elaboration of this idea.

In line with their fundamental deterministic position Soviet physicists and philosophers are gratified to note that western physicists are also currently reverting to a more deterministic interpretation of quantum physics, a development which they find most marked in the case of Louis de Broglie.[13]

A further focal point of discussion for Soviet philosophy of science, within the general area of atomic physics, is to be found in the mass-energy problem. As mentioned above, the special theory of relativity yields as a corollary the so-called principle of energy inertia. It was known even before Einstein that light waves and electromagnetic waves upon meeting a body exert a pressure caused by radiation. Among the most important contributions in this field had been the work of the Russian physicist Lebedev, who demonstrated the pressure exerted by light as early as 1899. Einstein, on the basis of his special theory of relativity, was able to generalise this fact into the 'principle of energy inertia,' whereby any quantity of energy corresponds to an inertial mass according to the formula $E=mc^2$. That implies that mass and energy are fundamentally the same, and the principle of the conservation of mass therefore combines with the principle of the conservation of energy into a general principle of conservation.

This law became a fundamental law of the whole field of atomic physics and is applied, above all, in the exploitation of atomic energy. Since the disintegration of the atomic nucleus is accompanied by a phenomenon known as a 'disappearance of mass,' reference is frequently made to a 'conversion' of mass, or even to a conversion of matter into energy and to a destruction of matter. Thus, for example, Jeans and Eddington find in the radiation of energy from the sun and the stars a 'destruction' of matter; K. Darrow regards the spontaneous disintegration of uranium as a conversion of matter into something which is not matter; C. Chase and L. Barnett see in the effect of an atomic bomb a conversion of matter into energy and regard matter itself as merely a form of energy. Occasionally rather hasty philosophical conclusions are drawn from this. Thus P. Jordan asserts on the basis of these facts that the new physics destroys the scientific bases of materialism. E. Brightman sees in energy 'the divine will in action.'[14]

[10] D. I. Blokhintsev, 'Kritika filosofskikh vozzrenii tak nazyvaemoi "Kopengagenskoi Shkoly,"' in *Filosofskie Voprosy . . .*, p. 389.

[11] *Voprosy Filosofii*, 1952, No. 4, pp. 170-174.

[12] Blokhintsev, 'Kritika . . .' p. 375.

[13] *Voprosy Filosofii*, 1954, No. 6, p. 146.

[14] Cf. N. F. Ovchinnikov, in *Filosofskie Voprosy . . .*

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is these often very dubious conclusions which are sometimes drawn from the principle of energy inertia that explain why Soviet physicists and philosophers vigorously reject that interpretation of the principle according to which matter can be 'converted' into energy. They are concerned to show that in the case of the above-mentioned transmutations of the atom, where a 'disappearance of mass' is to be found, as well as in the case of the conversion of an electron-positron pair into two gamma-photons ('total transformation into radiation'), there is no conversion of mass into energy at all. The enormous kinetic energy released when an atom is split derives, they say, not from a disappearance of mass but from the cohesion-energy of the atomic particles. The escaping mass has not been converted into the kinetic energy of the fragments which are flying apart at an enormous speed, but has changed from 'mass at rest' into 'mass in motion.' For it follows from the special theory of relativity that the mass of a moving body increases proportionately to its speed. Therefore the fragments, on account of the great velocity of their motion, require in addition to their 'mass at rest' a supplementary 'mass in motion,' which is provided, precisely, by the disappearance of mass. A similar situation prevails with the conversion of electrons into photons.[15]

In cosmology and cosmogony too, Soviet astronomers and philosophers have ideological goals in view. They are concerned to refute any theory or hypothesis which would involve the temporal beginning or spatial finiteness of the universe. Since, according to the second law of thermodynamics (law of entropy), higher forms of energy when once converted into heat cannot be completely reconverted, the universe would approach a condition in which all higher forms of energy are converted into heat uniformly distributed throughout the universe. But since this condition has not yet come about, the conclusion is drawn that the world cannot have existed from eternity and therefore must have had a beginning. Soviet cosmology objects that this situation is valid only for finite systems and is therefore untenable with respect to the universe, which is spatially infinite.[16]

Soviet cosmologists are also deeply concerned over the problem of the shifting of the red lines in the light spectrum of all distant nebulæ. This shifting is usually explained by reference to the fact that the source of the light is moving away from us at a high velocity, *i.e.*, a 'flight' of the nebulæ. From this premise the point in time is calculated at which the universe had a volume of zero, which again indicates a temporal beginning for the developmental process of the world. Soviet scholars try in various ways to achieve a different interpretation of the shifting of the red lines. Most frequently they see the flaw in the above interpretation of the phenomenon in the fact that the results of investigations of those parts of the metagalaxy nearest to us are extended to the whole (infinite) universe and arbitrarily extrapolated into the past, a method which they claim to be illegitimate.[17]

The same ideological background forms the basis of Soviet work in the field of cosmogony. The theory of Jeans is rejected here because it is still too reminiscent of geocentrism. Jeans conceived of the creation of the earth and the planets in terms of the passing of another star of great mass near the sun millions of years ago which extracted from the sun matter that split up into the planets. Such an event, however, would be one of extreme rarity in the universe and would therefore in a sense confer an exceptional status on the earth.[18]

In Soviet cosmogony a pre-eminent position is still occupied by the theory of O. Yu. Shmidt, a member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR who died in September, 1956. According to this theory the earth and the planets were created by the passage of the sun, in its orbit around the gravitational centre of the Milky Way, through a cloud consisting of gas, dust,

[15] O. Vislobokov, *O nerazryvnosti materii i dvizheniya*, Moscow, 1955, p. 89, etc.

[16] Cf. *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopedia*, Vol. 23, p. 110.

[17] Cf. N. P. Barabashev, *Borba s idealizmom v oblasti kosmogonicheskikh i kosmologicheskikh gipotez*, Kharkov, 1952, p. 117, and A. A. Zhdanov in *Bolshevik*, 1947, No. 16.

[18] Cf. Barabashev, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and medium-sized particles of matter, part of which it took along with it and which then formed the earth and the planets. The latter, according to this theory, would have been cold to begin with and acquired heat only as a result of nuclear processes taking place within them in the course of time.[19] This theory, to be sure, has not been allowed to go unchallenged among Soviet astronomers. It was contested, in particular, by V. G. Fesenkov, who for his part submitted a rotational hypothesis. Nevertheless, Shmidt's hypothesis still enjoys great prestige in the Soviet Union and is also used as a premise in certain related branches of science; above all, it is utilised in connection with propaganda for 'scientific atheism.'

In the field of sidereal cosmogony V. A. Ambarkumyan has submitted a highly regarded theory according to which the stars are created in groups ('associations'), a process which is held to be still continuing.[20]

We come now to the question of the origin of life. The director of the Institute for Biochemistry of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, A. I. Oparin, has evolved a theory about the origin of life on earth, highly regarded in the West too, in which he attempts to show a way in which life on earth could have begun as a result of the evolutionary process.[21] It is true that even in Soviet scientific literature certain criticisms of his theory have been expressed in the last few years, but it nevertheless still commands the greatest authority in the Soviet Union.

Soviet scholars in this respect attempt to occupy a middle-of-the-road position in the famous mechanism-vitalism dispute. On the one hand they are at pains to avoid identifying themselves with mechanism as regards both the *essence* and the *origin* of living matter. With respect to the problem of the essence of life the Soviet position, in contradistinction to mechanism, is that the phenomena of life are not susceptible of complete explanation by reference to physico-chemical laws, but that where life is concerned essentially new and higher laws operate, namely, the 'biological form of matter in motion.' Similarly, Soviet scholars reject the mechanistic theory of an accidental origin of life. According to the Soviet conception life did not originate accidentally but is, on the contrary, the result of an inordinately long process of evolution taking place deterministically and governed by certain laws. Oparin himself, as impressively as any adherent of vitalism, rehearses the futility of trying to explain the creation of a functioning molecule of albumen in terms of a chance combination of its atoms.[22] Nevertheless the Soviet position is to be distinguished, on the other hand, from vitalism too by virtue of its vigorous rejection, among other things, of the concept of 'entelechy' or a 'principle of life,' and its explanation of the significant superiority of life to phenomena regulated by purely chemical laws in terms of the production of a new higher 'quality,' life, by a 'dialectical leap' at a certain juncture of the developmental process.

Oparin distinguishes three stages in the process of evolution of lifeless matter into life. The first consists of the creation of organic chemical combinations out of inorganic ones. Previously the theory had been commonly held that organic combinations could come into being only by a 'biogenetic' process, *i.e.*, only through the agency of living beings. But for a hundred years chemists have been successfully producing new organic combinations synthetically, and astronomers have shown that even on the stars, in temperatures precluding any form of life, organic materials exist. This stage, therefore, no longer presents any problems to Oparin.

The second stage consists of the creation of albumen. The American Stanley L. Miller succeeded in 1953 in producing amino-acids synthetically; in 1947 the Leningrad biochemist Bresler had successfully reconstituted albumen by the method of 'resynthesizing' amino-acids, produced by decomposing existing albumen, by the addition of fermenting agents under very high pressure (5,000-10,000 atmospheres).

[19] O. Yu. Shmidt, *Chetyre Lektsii o teorii proizkhozhdeniya zemli i planet*, 1950.

[20] *Vestnik Akademii Nauk*, 1953, No. 12, pp. 49-60.

[21] A. I. Oparin, *Vozniknovenie zhizni na zemle*, Moscow, 1957 (Eng. translation of first edition, *The Origin of Life*, New York, 1938).

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Oparin is of the opinion that these two successes have considerably advanced biochemistry towards solving the problem of the synthesis of albumen, and that they also indicate the direction which future research will have to take.

The third stage comprises the ulterior process of the evolution of matter from the simple molecule of albumen to the formation of the first supra-molecular structures which manifest life in the true sense of the word. Oparin does not accept as constituting life the mere process of self-perpetuation which takes place even in the simple molecule of albumen; on the contrary, what Oparin regards as characteristic of life is 'purposefulness,' the orderly collaboration and the strictly determined temporal succession of a multitude of separate chemical reactions and their arrangement with a view to attaining a very definite goal: the constant self-renewal of the organism. So far as this third stage is concerned, Oparin himself admits that the problem is not even stated with sufficient clarity yet. His theory starts from the premise of certain properties of colloids which include albumen solutions. If different albumen solutions are mixed the separate macro-molecules combine into drop-like structures which are capable of extracting various materials from the liquid surrounding them. By means of the gradual perfection of these supra-molecular structures, regarded by Oparin as itself an instance of the principle of natural selection, actual metabolic processes occurred, and so ultimately the first instance of life.[23]

Very recently a number of Soviet biologists have raised objections to Oparin's theory. They make the point that according to Engels even the single molecule of albumen is to be regarded as living on account of the metabolic processes taking place within it.

Still, all Soviet biologists are agreed that life is not necessarily conditional upon the existence of cells. At one time the Soviet scholar Lepeshinskaya had claimed to have produced 'living matter' in a precellular stage by grinding down a species of polyps, and her theory was viewed with high favour by the Soviet authorities. More recently, however, Soviet biologists have moved away from this theory and have cast doubts upon the conclusiveness of Madame Lepeshinskaya's experiments.[24] But this does not mean that Soviet biology has returned to Virchow's thesis: *Omnis cellula e cellula.* It is assumed, rather, that in the course of its historical development life must have been sustained at one time in precellular form. It is interesting, by the way, that Soviet biologists attach no special significance to the virus problem in connection with explaining the origins of life. Viruses are in general regarded as products of degeneration.

The field in which the conflict between Soviet and 'bourgeois' science had been at its sharpest in the years before Stalin's death was genetics. It can be taken for granted that the substance of the quarrel over 'Michurinist biology' is well enough known.[25] The focal point consisted of the thesis established by I. V. Michurin and elaborated by T. D. Lysenko in their doctrine of heredity, that properties acquired by the organism during its life may also be passed on through heredity. Adherents of the classical Mendel-Morgan doctrine of heredity among Soviet biologists were muzzled at the 'historic August session' of the Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences in 1948, at which Lysenko announced that the Central Committee of the Party had put its stamp of approval on his theory.

After Stalin's death a partial reorientation in this field is noticeable, but a less decisive one than, for example, in the case of relativity theory. Adherents of the classical doctrine of heredity returned to leading positions, and the opposition to Lysenko once more made itself felt. Since 1953 a discussion has been under way in the course of which Lysenko's teaching on species and the formation of species has been vehemently criticised. Lysenko's theory does not admit any struggle for existence within the several species, but only mutual support of the individuals for the purpose of maintaining

[23] *Vestnik Akademii Nauk*, 1953, No. 12, pp. 39-48.

[24] L. N. Zhinkin and V. P. Mikhailov in *Uspekhi sovremennoi biologii*, 1953, Vol. 39.

[25] Cf. P. S. Hudson and R. H. Richens, *Genetics in the Soviet Union*, Cambridge, 1946; and T. Dobshansky in *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Chicago, 1952, No. 2.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the existence of their species in its struggles with other species.[26]

The opposition to Lysenko had become so strong by 1956 that he resigned his office of president of the Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences. In May of that year the Party organ, *Partiinaya Zhizn,* complained that as a result of acting on his advice great damage had been done to agriculture in Western Siberia.[27] Adherents of the classical doctrine once again occupied the leading positions in the genetical institutes in Moscow and Leningrad. These facts, however, must not be taken to mean that Michurinist biology has been abandoned in the Soviet Union. As recently as April, 1957, Khrushchev commented favourably on Lysenko in three speeches following closely upon one another, defending him against the attacks of his opponents and endorsing his vernalisation method of sowing maize.[28]

In the field of psychology a very interesting discussion has been taking place in the Soviet Union in recent years. Soviet psychology is based on the teaching of the first Russian Nobel Prize winner, the physiologist I. P. Pavlov (1849-1936). Pavlov's specific scientific achievement consisted in the doctrine of 'conditioned reflexes.' If a dog salivates when a piece of meat is placed in his mouth, that is an unconditioned reflex. But if (after repeated performances) he salivates at the mere sight of the food, that is a conditioned reflex, produced by the fact that feeding was many times over preceded by the sight of the food. The whole complex of conditioned reflexes that an organism acquired in the course of time constituted the 'first system of signals,' according to Pavlov. For these reflexes fulfil the function of indicators of favourable and unfavourable conditions for life which the organism must either seek or flee. The first system of signals is common to animals and men, in Pavlov's teaching. But the so-called 'second system of signals,' consisting of heard, spoken, or seen words, is the exclusive prerogative of man. Still, according to Pavlov, both systems are governed by the same laws, since what is involved is the operation of the same nervous system.

Pavlov's doctrine was solemnly endorsed in 1950 at a joint session of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and the Academy of Medical Sciences and constitutes the official basis of Soviet psychology, physiology, and medicine. Nevertheless the efforts of certain physiologists who wish simply to absorb psychology into physiology are rejected in no uncertain terms, since this would involve a relapse from the achievements of dialectical materialism into 'vulgar materialism.' This controversy gave rise to a discussion among Soviet psychologists concerning the subject-matter of psychology.

One group of writers, especially N. P. Antonov, believed that the basic error of those who wished to reduce psychology to physiology consisted in their complete identification of psychic activity with the 'activity of the higher nervous system' investigated by Pavlov. They insisted that, on the contrary, a clear distinction must be maintained between the physiological process of the activity of the higher nervous system and the psychic process, and that although the two constituted an inseparable unit they could not simply be identified.[29]

Another group, however, took violent exception to this thesis. Their principal objection was that, according to his theory, Antonov would logically be obliged to assume a spiritual soul as substratum for the psychic processes which are distinguished from the activity of the higher nervous system. N. A. Khromov, a leading exponent of this tendency, maintains that the psychic process is not a separate one, but merely a phase in the process of the activity of the higher nervous system, and that the substratum of this process is the brain. Psychic phenomena (ideas, consciousness) are admittedly immaterial, but nonetheless mere 'products' or 'properties of the physiological form of matter in motion.'[30]

The evident contradiction in which Soviet psychologists find themselves here witnesses to the dilemma in which they are trapped, since on the one hand they are prohibited from reduc-

[26] T. D. Lysenko in *Filosofskie Voprosy Sovremennoi Biologii,* Moscow, 1951.

[27] 1956, No. 9, p. 30.

[28] *Pravda,* 1, 5, 10, April, 1957.

[29] *Voprosy Filosofii,* 1953, No. 1, pp. 195-202.

[30] *Ibid.,* 1953, No. 4, pp. 216-218.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing psychology to physiology, while on the other hand they may not assume a spiritual soul as a substratum for psychic processes.[31]

* * *

The material submitted above enables us now to answer the question raised at the beginning of this article as to the extent to which the success of the sputnik may be regarded as proof of the correctness and superiority of Soviet ideology. In fact, the conclusion at which we arrive on the basis of the preceding survey of the relationship between philosophy and science in the Soviet Union is just the opposite. The close link between science and dialectical materialism exercises, if anything, a detrimental effect; this appeared with especial clarity in the field of relativity theory before the reorientation had taken place, and also in the fields of genetics and psychology. The great practical achievements in technology, therefore, have come to pass not *because of* the alliance between Soviet physical science and dialectical materialism but *in spite of* the entanglement of science with ideology. And the great achievements of Soviet technology recently may not be unrelated to the significant fact that the reorientation of Soviet science since Stalin's death has been pressed forward more vigorously precisely in physics than in the field of biology.

[31] A detailed discussion of the questions dealt with here can be found in the present writer's book on Dialectical Materialism which will shortly be published by Routledge & Kegan Paul (London).

Our Contributors

VERA ALEXANDROVA, literary critic, formerly director of the Chekhov publishing house.

ALFRED BURMEISTER, writer and literary critic; of Polish origin, lived for fifteen years in the USSR.

PHILIP BRUCE COOK, of the Russian Institute of Columbia University.

ERNEST GELLNER, Reader in the Department of Sociology, London School of Economics, born in Paris, educated Prague and Oxford.

GEORGE GIBIAN, Assistant Professor of Russian and English literature at Smith College; author of *Tolstoi and Shakespeare*, etc.

HELEN RAPP, born in Yugoslavia of Russian parents, educated Oxford and London; Lecturer in Russian Language and Literature at the School of Slavonic Studies.

Z. BEN SHLOMO, writer on Soviet affairs on the staff of *Ha'aretz*, Tel Aviv.

GLEB STRUVE, Professor of Slavic Languages and Literature in the University of California; formerly Reader in Russian Literature in the University of London; author of *Soviet Russian Literature: 1917-1950*.

MORRIS WATNICK, now at the Russian Research Center of Harvard University, working on a study of the problem of class consciousness; has translated Rudolf Hilferding's *Das Finanzkapital*, to appear shortly, and done extensive work on the politics of underdeveloped areas.

GUSTAV WETTER, S.J., author of classic study of Soviet philosophy, *Der dialektische Materialismus*, to appear shortly in English translation; since 1943 Professor of the History of Russian Philosophy at the Papal Oriental Institute in Rome.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Essays in Intellectual Biography

GEORG LUKACS: or AESTHETICS AND COMMUNISM

*Morris Watnick**

I

THOSE who see much of the pathos of history lodged in its ironies could hardly find a better personification of that dialectic than in the career of the Hungarian philosopher-critic, Georg Lukacs—nor one so symptomatic of the perplexities of intellectual commitment in the Communist world.

Lukacs' rôle as one of the leading spirits of the Petöfi Circle, his participation in the abortive Nagy government, and his subsequent deportation to Rumania, where he spent some four months under house arrest, are vivid reminders of the recurrent clash between his Marxism and the realities of Communist power. But, as it turned out, they were also the prelude to another —and perhaps the last—of the many anti-climactic tergiversations that have marked his career as a Communist ideologue and made him one of the most successful 'deviationists' in the history of the movement. Five months after the suppression of the Hungarian uprising he was back in Budapest, seemingly none the worse off for the experience and, at that, appointed co-editor of a new philosophical journal and allowed a limited freedom to publish his books abroad.[1] Of those who figured prominently in the uprising, then, he is apparently the only leader thus far to have made his peace with the Kadar régime and to resume something of his former work. What is more, he has not been required to issue any recantation for his part in the 'counter-revolution,' nor is there any indication that he will.

Be that as it may, no one knows better than Lukacs that he is enjoying nothing more than a reprieve for good behaviour. For what the Communist régimes dread is not the man, but his Marxism and the almost legendary prestige that sustains it. Lukacs' name has become a by-word for the 'revisionist' impulse in Communist doctrine, his Marxism one of the penultimate sources of the 'humanistic' heresy that has insinuated itself into the minds of Communist intellectuals throughout Eastern Europe.[2] And to add doctrinal exegetics to political urgency, it is condemned today, much as it was a generation ago, for its truck with the Hegelian dialectic. If nothing else, the sustained and frontal attacks on his ideas which still make the rounds of official Communist literature, particularly in East Germany, leave little doubt that the Communist régimes continue to regard him as one of their most formidable intellectual threats *intra muros*. In the circumstances, one can only surmise that Lukacs has survived, and even escaped the fate of Tibor Dery, Gyula Hay, and others, primarily by dint of his towering repu-

[1] Several months after his return to Hungary it was learned that a new book by Lukacs, dealing with the contemporary significance of critical realism in literature, would be published in Italy. This will be the first time in ten years that a new book by Lukacs has had to find a publisher outside the Communist zone. It remains to be seen whether the same quasi-censorship will be applied to a three-volume study on general æsthetics which Lukacs promised on his return to Hungary.

* The author is grateful to the Russian Research Center at Harvard University for making it possible to undertake research on the problem of class consciousness from which this study is derived. He also wishes to thank Mr. Irwin Weil, Dr. Alexander Eckstein, and Dr. Zoltan Mihaly, all of Harvard University, for translating materials from the Russian, Hungarian, and Slovak.

[2] The new valuational norms being introduced into Marxist thought in Poland doubtless owe much of their inspiration to the humanistic reading of original Marxism to be found in Lukacs' *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*. In other respects, however, the writings of Kolakowski, Bochenski, Kott, and other Polish Marxists reflect a trend of thought which Lukacs would reject.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tation throughout Europe as a Marxist thinker and literary critic. Beyond that, he has little prospect of escaping the political isolation and impuissance in which he now finds himself, to say nothing of the strict surveillance the régime will maintain over his every word and deed.

It may well be that Lukacs takes all this with a certain equanimity. 'Solitude,' he once observed in his pre-Marxist days, 'is . . . the genuine essence of the tragic; for the soul, having fulfilled itself in destiny, may have others of its kind, but no companions.'[3] If that mood of resignation still persists—a not unlikely supposition, given the values by which he has lived his life—the latest turn of fortune should not blunt his writing edge, much less interfere with his outward show of compliance with the present structure of Communist rule. Inveterate deviationist that he has been, his staying power and sense of commitment have always had a way of prevailing in the end.

Certainly, if survival as a Communist comes at such a price, Lukacs has already paid it many times over in the past. Ever since he enlisted in the Communist cause in 1918, his career has been one long recital of deviations and recantations, followed by long stretches of disfavour, semi-oblivion, and the usual sadisms of party life—so much so, that it would not be overstating the case to call him a Marxist in many ways more esteemed in 'the false consciousness of the bourgeoisie' than among Stalinist and other doctrinaires in his own camp.[4] And in a movement that has been nothing if not doctrinaire, his survival is an experience well worth recalling, not so much for its own sake, but as a study of intellectual *engagement* as practised by one of its most articulate exponents.

To understand the quality of Lukacs' Marxism and his anomalous rôle in the Communist movement, one has to recapture something of the mood of the German intellectual and literary world after the turn of the century. For it was largely from that world, moving in the orbit of the *Geisteswissenschaften* of Dilthey, Simmel, Tonnies, and Weber, that Lukacs made his transition to Marxism at the end of the first World War.

If he had any knowledge of the issues which Marxists of the day argued so vehemently—something he could hardly avoid in that heyday of classical Marxism—it was little more than the passing knowledge of an outsider, untouched by commitment and inclined, in any case, to dismiss philosophical materialism of any kind as something 'entirely superseded from an epistemological point of view.'[5] Vaguely socialist though his sympathies were, or perhaps because they were merely anti-capitalist, they lacked the urgency of political action. At any rate, political Marxism had no appeal for him, not even in the neo-Kantian terms he might have found philosophically most acceptable. To be sure, he was impressed by other elements of traditional Marxism, notably the doctrine of surplus value and the class reading of history, but to a person of his philosophic and æsthetic temper, these were of peripheral interest. What mattered most to him was the life of the spirit, particularly as it expressed itself in æsthetic values. And it was in the exploration of such values that Lukacs established himself, at a very early age, as one of the most gifted essayists and critics in Central Europe.

Born in 1885 of a very prosperous family—his father was director of the Kreditanstalt of Budapest, then the largest bank in Hungary—

[3] G. von Lukacs, 'Die Theorie des Romans.' *Zeitschrift für Aesthetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft,* Bd. XI, Heft 3, 1916, p. 237.

[4] In this respect Lukacs is unique among Communist intellectuals in Eastern Europe, enjoying an international prestige far beyond anything the others could hope to emulate. It is not altogether anomalous, for example, to find writers so far apart in æsthetic outlook as Sir Herbert Read and Thomas Mann exalting him as 'the most intelligent Marxist critic of our times.' This admiration is shared in varying degree by many others in the West far less indulgent of Lukacs' political philosophy. Thus, for example, the *Times Literary Supplement* thought him sufficiently important to devote a lead article (September 22, 1950) to a sympathetic review of his work. For the rest, his influence in such fields as the sociology of knowledge and the interpretation of Hegel makes it easy to appreciate why so many consider him the most original Marxist mind at work today.

[5] G. Lukacs, 'Mein Weg zu Marx' in *Georg Lukacs: Zum Siebzigsten Geburtstag,* Berlin, 1955, p. 226. Lukacs first published this autobiographic apologia when he was under strong pressure to disavow his pre-Marxist past. Nevertheless, it recapitulates the main lines of his early intellectual development with reasonable fidelity.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lukacs hardly knew late adolescence when he began to show that tense intellectuality, omnivorous erudition, and remarkable sensibility of spirit that were to be so apparent in much of what he later wrote and practised. After preliminary studies in Budapest, he moved to Berlin and, later still, to Heidelberg, sampling the best the German universities had to offer in the social sciences and humanities and, in turn, impressing his teachers, Simmel and Max Weber in particular, with his prodigious intellectual gifts.

His years of formal schooling and after were characteristic of the hectic pace of writing and other activities he was to maintain throughout his life.[6] While still a student, he collaborated in establishing the Thalia, Budapest's first venture in the 'free theatre,' and in launching Hungary's foremost liberal journal, *Nyugat* (*The West*). A mere youngster then, barely past his 'teens, Lukacs could also take popular lecturing in his stride and, in addition, contribute prolifically to various periodicals, German as well as Hungarian. And with all these to account for his time, he was still able to publish his first major work in 1908, *A History of the Evolution of the Modern Drama,* a two-volume study that won him a prize from the Hungarian Academy and established him as a critic-philosopher-sociologist of the first rank.[7] The best known of his pre-Marxist writings—and one that was later to join the other skeletons in his intellectual closet—was a collection of literary essays, *Die Seele und die Formen* (Berlin, 1911), followed several years later by an unfinished philosophical study of the novel.[8]

Try as he might Lukacs has never been able to live down these, his pre-Marxist credentials—either to his own satisfaction or to that of his orthodox critics in the Communist movement. They serve too well as tokens of a past that he could seldom accept in good conscience. To the Lukacs who has had to justify his party commitment to himself, if not to others, that past has been an alien influence persistently interfering with the requirements of orthodoxy; yet for Lukacs the Marxist, there is no escaping its influence without discarding his Marxism. For the orthodox Communist case has at least this much in its favour: Lukacs' Marxism is what it is precisely because it is still 'tainted' by an overly Hegelian dialectic and, what is even more suspect in strict party terms, by the influence of the *Geisteswissenschaften.*

As a student Lukacs took his intellectual bearings from the neo-Kantians, then the dominant school of thought in Germany. If we are to judge by his early æsthetic writings, however, he was least influenced by the consensus of neo-Kantian doctrine in matters of epistemology. He could not quite accept the view, for example, that our knowledge of the empirical world is, in the final analysis, merely a product of the immanent categories of understanding; nor, on the other hand, was he satisfied that ultimate reality or its attributes are beyond the reach of the human mind. In the moral and æsthetic sphere at least, it is apparent that he believed certain ultimates or 'real essences' to be cognisable through intuition. Far from being the subjective idealist of his later 'self-criticism,' he was evidently most influenced by the semi-phenomenological position of Emil Lask at Heidelberg, an influence that later facilitated his shift to the objective idealism of Hegel.

Otherwise, Lukacs was a fairly consistent neo-Kantian and nowhere more strikingly so than with regard to human, moral, and æsthetic problems and in the methodological approach

[6] Not counting a vast number of periodical contributions still unassembled in book form, his publications must now come to some thirty-five volumes. Those published before 1918 went under the name of Georg von Lukacs, the hereditary title having been awarded to his father for his services as a financier and discarded by Lukacs when he became a Communist.

[7] Unfortunately, neither this study nor two other books of the same period have ever been translated from the Hungarian. A small portion of this history of the drama, however, modifying to some extent the outright anti-sociological bias of the original, was later published in German. Lukacs' doctoral thesis, *Die Metaphysik der Tragödie* (1907), was later reprinted in his *Die Seele und die Formen.*

[8] Originally intended as the first part of a study of Dostoevsky, the work was interrupted by the war and had to be published in its incomplete form in *Zeitschrift für Aesthetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft,* Bd. 3 (1916), Heft 3 and Heft 4.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to them. Like all others of that school, he rejected the pretentious Hegelian claim that philosophy is the all-inclusive summation of human knowledge. The empirical world, he insisted with other neo-Kantians, was properly the domain of specialised branches of knowledge and skill, *e.g.* that of the artist and writer in their efforts to capture its immediacies; all that philosophy can legitimately do is formulate the canons of validity by which to evaluate the performance of these specialised activities in the arts and sciences. And going a step further, it is also clear from his writings of the period that Lukacs shared the approach favoured by most neo-Kantians who concerned themselves with the social sciences. The rational methods by which natural science 'explains' the external world, he thought, had little to offer in æsthetics; to cope with its problems of meaning, purpose, and 'destiny,' the critic needed the inner perception of understanding. And again—though here other neo-Kantians would have demurred—the understanding he sought was not the understanding of reason; taking his cue from the vitalism and intuitionism of Dilthey and Simmel, he urged that the human subject can achieve such understanding, particularly the understanding of his self, only through flashes of intuition given to those who live and struggle for it.

It was from these elements of doctrine—partly neo-Kantian, partly vitalistic—that Lukacs derived his early æsthetic outlook. The scientific attitude, needless to say, had no place in his realm of æsthetic values. Science, he argued, is concerned with matters of content, with data and their interrelations; æsthetics, with the world of the spirit and ideal essences. Their methods were therefore radically different and so, too, were the criteria to be applied in evaluating their respective results.

With science disposed of, Lukacs went on to argue that æsthetics had still another division of labour, all its own. In a vein reminiscent of Plato and the medieval realists, he insisted that there are æsthetic values or abstract forms which constitute the categoric *a priori* of all art, but which the artist, as such, could not attain. 'Poetry,' he argued, 'is prior to, greater . . . and more important than all works of poetry. . . . The idea is present before all its manifestations; it is a spiritual value, a mover of the world and a builder of life, in its own right.'[9] But the artist, as an artist, is concerned with concrete images (*Bilder*), not with their meaning (*Bedeutung*); the latter, presumably, is the province of the philosophical critic. The artist and the Platonist are thus 'polar opposites,' and Lukacs had little hesitation stating his preference. 'If various forms of writing were compared to sunlight refracted through a prism, the writings of essayists would be the ultra-violet rays.'[10] Nor did he leave any doubt about his anti-naturalistic bias, thus anticipating what was to bulk so large in his later Marxist writings. 'Every realism,' he wrote—meaning naturalism—'is bound to destroy the form-creating and therefore life-sustaining values of the tragic drama. . . . The drama is bound to be trivial when that which is close to life conceals what is dramatically real. . . . The inner style of the drama is realistic in the medieval, scholastic sense and this excludes every modern realism.'[11]

In an important sense, then, one might say that one of the principal metaphysical mainstays of the doctrine of 'critical realism' was an integral part of Lukacs' æsthetic long before the doctrine was born. The Platonic ingredient of abstract forms was to reappear—in a more rationalised Hegelian guise, to be sure, and assigned an 'objective' social coefficient missing in its prototype—in his later writings as a Marxist critic. Obviously, however, he could not consistently apprehend these abstract forms on such terms in his youth, having ruled out scientific values as irrelevant. In fact, strongly influenced by the vitalism of Dilthey and Simmel and, to some extent, by the intuitionist mood of Stefan Georg and his followers, he saw no way at all of apprehending these æsthetic ultimates rationally. Though the abstract forms are 'real,' they cannot be 'known'; they manifest themselves in certain vital experiences, symbolised in fate and tragedy for the solitary individual, and are therefore denied to the rational understanding or even to the imagery of the artist. It

[9] *Die Seele und die Formen*, pp. 34-35.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 342-343.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is only when criticism explores the 'destiny-creating' principle that it can yield some dim, intuitive awareness of them.

But all this, thought Lukacs, was of little concern to the creative writer, since his is the more modest and manageable task of giving an image of the empirical world, a task in which the writer can achieve greatness without having to settle accounts with the ultimate nature of reality, much less the problems of society.

In this respect, at least, Lukacs' outlook was neo-Kantian to a fault. For if his argument meant anything, the creative artistry of the writer and the philosophic judgment or, better still, the intuition of the critic must differ not only in degree, but also in kind and in purpose. A writer would thus have to be judged on his own terms, not by the extraneous standards of the philosopher-critic; each has his own garden to cultivate.[12]

So characteristically neo-Kantian a dichotomy could not survive Lukacs' conversion to Marxism, all the more so since it was to be a Marxism of the pronounced Hegelian type. The writer was thereafter required to combine in his own mind and art the function of the critic as well; he would have to become his *own* philosopher-sociologist, warned that his creative gift would go to waste unless it were informed by an intellectual grasp of society's 'laws of motion.' In other words, sociological realism was to be made an indispensable ingredient of great literature—if not by the writer's conscious commitment to Marxism, then at least by his ability to apply something of that unconscious para-Marxism which Lukacs discerned in all the great masters of the past. But one way or the other, the 'realism' that Lukacs sought in literature was to be a realism embraced by the writer himself for the sake of his own art and for the audience to which it was addressed, not something prescribed from without. If this was asking more of the writer's art than a neo-Kantian could consistently demand, it was also conceding more to his subjectivity than Communist policies were to tolerate—as Lukacs was to discover at his own risk.

The relation of literature to its social environment was still another of the issues on which Lukacs' early views gave his later Marxism a characteristic direction that did little to endear him to other Communists, particularly those with a penchant for Marxism of the reductive kind. In fact, much of his earliest work on the drama was a repudiation of the sociological reductionism of its day. Æsthetic values as such, argued Lukacs the neo-Kantian, much as he was later to do as a Marxist, cannot be derived by a process of sociological imputation; the content of a work of art or literature, its æsthetic quality, is a problem *sui generis*. What sociological analysis can do—and this Lukacs went to some length to emphasise—is to show how the social environment acts as a selective medium in determining which æsthetic values find actual expression as going cultural concerns. It may even account for the general outlook of the artist and, therefore, for the themes he turns to in his work, but never for the results of that work. It was in fact in these terms that Lukacs analysed the sociology of literary forms such as the drama, the epic poem, and the novel, pointing out, for example, how the quality of the modern drama is related to the ethos of the bourgeoisie and to the dimensions of urban life.[13]

What Lukacs surveyed as a sociologist distressed him as an æsthete and humanist. He found modern society inhospitable to his own æsthetic values and had a particular aversion for what it was doing to the drama. Increasingly an art form of the bourgeoisie, it had become at once both moralistic and rationalistic (in contrast to the religious and mythological type of drama) and, under the influence of modern urban life, naturalistic in style to the point of sensationalism. As a result, genuine drama was being relegated to book form, substituting analysis for symbol and thus being intellectualised to a degree that made it the favourite

[12] Needless to say, this was not meant as a denial of the critic's right to apply his own philosophical outlook in judging a writer's work. In fact, this is what Lukacs did in the separate essays that make up *Die Seele und die Formen*. Nevertheless, what he did was consistent with the neo-Kantian principle of the relativity of values.

[13] G. von Lukacs, 'Zur soziologie des modernen Dramas,' *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, Bd. 38 (1914), Heft 2, pp. 304-316.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of a small minority. Even the little theatre, on which he had once pinned his hope, could do little to stem the tide, for it too had to cater to mass taste.

All this and much more Lukacs attributed, as might be expected from one of his intellectual antecedents, to the 'alienation' of modern man, *i.e.* to his loss of footing in the traditional forms of close group living, the resulting depersonalisation of all his relations with others, and the 'rationalisation' of his work to make it conform to quantitative standards that bear no relation to his own needs. What appalled him most about the industrial society of his pre-Marxist period, without making him insensitive to its economic problems, was its despoiled culture, æsthetic ugliness, and human uprootedness—in short, the way of life that passes more familiarly today under the pejoratives of 'mass culture' and 'mass society.'

Lukacs thus took a jaundiced view of industrial capitalism long before he became a Marxist, and when he did, his Marxism became a doctrine that never lost the humanistic and æsthetic traces of its origin. At its Stalinist worst, it continued to be a quest for man's restoration to his 'human essence.' What is more, it was Lukacs who was first, as we shall see, to revive this long, half-dormant element in Marxist thought, though it should be added that in this he was more the transplanter than innovator. The notion that industrial society deprives man of his self-identity and autonomy was one he learned from some of the leading figures in the German sociology of his youth, particularly from Simmel, whose *Philosophie des Geldes* (1900) played a considerable part in his intellectual development.

Not that the concept of 'alienation' was original with Simmel either, or with any of his contemporaries; it was something they distilled from Hegel and Marx, and then transmuted into a distinctly pessimistic social philosophy of their own, based on a form of romantic anti-capitalism that was inclined to regard material progress *per se* as a threat to cultural values.[14] Simmel, for example, saw all human institutions as an 'objectification of the spirit,' i.e. forms of 'self-alienation,' and concluded from this that there is an inescapable clash between man's creativity and his social norms and institutions, a clash that becomes most pronounced in complex societies. The process of self-alienation was thus seen as an eternal human imperative, condemning the individual to solitude in any society and particularly so in one of the complex, industrial type, regardless of the form its institutions take. In a word, self-alienation is man's human fate, not a matter of social arrangements as Marx thought.

The humanism of Lukacs' pre-Marxist period was akin to Simmel's—pessimistic, personal, and given to introspective withdrawal from the concerns of the day. Small wonder, then, that he found so much to admire in the poetry of Stefan Georg, or what he called the 'lyricism [of] the new solitude,' finding it all the more rooted in man because it divested him of all social ties. But for all its pessimistic accents, it owed too much to Dilthey's vitalism to be a philosophy of quietism; like Dilthey, Lukacs regarded action as the only way by which man can achieve self-consciousness, *i.e.* be restored to his selfhood. But action calls for a scale of preferences and, in formulating his own principle of choice, Lukacs supplied a partial preview of his later Marxist humanism, a humanism that was to go hand in hand with a party elitism of the most doctrinaire kind and, incidentally, to make of his own career as a Communist the violent paradox that it was. The fact that this was done by a literary critic talking the language of æsthetics did not make it any the less a general philosophy of action.

Reading literature, particularly the tragedy and the epic novel, as a philosopher-critic would, Lukacs had to formulate a standard of choice for selecting subject matter suited to the various literary forms. And, given his humanist orientation, the choice had to turn on the problem of man's selfhood. Hence his twin question: what makes life essential?; how can the

[14] For recent critical discussions of this romantic strain in German sociology of that period, see D. Bell, 'The Theory of Mass Society,' *Commentary*, July, 1956, and E. Shils, 'Daydreams and Nightmares: Reflections on the Criticism of Mass Culture,' *Sewanee Review*, Autumn, 1957, Cf. Lukacs' discussion of the same theme in his *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*, Berlin, 1955, p. 328ff.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

essential come to life? The term 'essential,' however, was intended not as a description of some felt order of needs, but as an imputation of values derived from *a priori* forms of being. 'Life,' thought Lukacs, 'is the most unreal and least alive of all forms of existence. . . . Genuine life is always . . . impossible on the empirical plane of living. . . . In ordinary life, we fulfil ourselves only marginally. . . . Our life has no real necessity here, merely what is given empirically.'[15] Accordingly, Lukacs saw life as a range of possibilities or what he called 'hierarchy of lives' (coupled with a corresponding order of literary forms), ranging from the 'ordinary' kind of life in which all choices are equally possible and in which, therefore, nothing is realised, to one of absolute norms which demand the ultimate of man, a life of high tension and action best represented in the tragedy. In life of the first type, absolute ethical values are compromised away for the sake of needs; in the one dramatised in tragedy, on the other hand, it is life itself which is sacrificed for the sake of these values. And only in such rare, great moments of tragedy, concluded Lukacs, do we live truly, become our 'real' human selves.

At first blush, an ethos so personal in depth and no less pessimistic in outlook may seem remote from the concerns of Marxism. And, as Marxism went at the time, it was in fact quite beside the point. Yet Lukacs had only to restate its terms, as he did after he became a Communist, to retain its basic presuppositions in Marxist guise: the tension between 'real' and 'ordinary' life was then to become a divergence between proletarian class consciousness and the felt interests of workers; the tension would no longer be the concern of the individual ego but of the proletariat as a social class; and its resolution would again be sought in the experiences of action, this time not in any vitalistic sense, however, but as a dialectical interaction, in Hegelian terms, between the proletariat as a maker of history and the history it made.

There was thus a distinct line of continuity between the intellectual world of the earlier Lukacs and the one to which he moved when he became a Marxist. To say this is not to minimise the difference between the two, or even to imply that the transition was a painless one. Indeed, it might never have taken place at all, were it not for the intellectual upheaval and psychological crisis precipitated by the first World War. To Lukacs, as to so many others of his generation, the war called for a drastic re-examination of all the values and presuppositions they had once taken for granted.

(A second article by Mr. Watnick on Georg Lukacs will be published in the next issue of SURVEY.)

[15] These extracts are from his doctoral thesis, 'Die Metaphysik der Tragödie,' reprinted in *Die Seele und die Formen.*

II

Ernst Kolman : or, Knowledge and Communism

Ernest Gellner

ONE can take a horse to water but one cannot make him drink. Similarly, you can thaw out intellectuals but you cannot make them think. Some will and some can't. The different degree to which various Soviet thinkers have liberalised their thought since Stalin's death illustrates this. This differentiation reflects or leads to an opposition between a liberal and a dogmatic wing.

A most characteristic, intelligent, and frank expression of the liberal view is a recent pamphlet published in Moscow by Professor Ernst Iaromirovich Kolman about the philosophic problems of contemporary physics.[1] This perceptive, closely argued essay shows how far things have moved: it could never be the object of the classical Russian joke of de-Stalinisation that thought is the shortest line between two quotations.

The subject which, not surprisingly, appears to rouse very great interest in present Soviet thought is indeed the philosophical implications of physics. The effort is to show that the typically modern features of physics such as

[1] E. Kolman: *Filosofskie Problemy Sovremennoi Fisiki,* Moscow, 1957, 40 pp.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Heisenberg's discovery about sub-atomic particles, the transmutation of energy and mass, the co-presence of wave- and particle-models, Einsteinian relativity, are all to be interpreted in a 'materialistic' way. If one reflects on the extent to which modern physics has stimulated contemporary 'bourgeois philosophy' (*e.g.*, Einstein's treatment of simultaneity preparing the ground for the positivist doctrine that a sign without a rôle is one without meaning, or the way the use of non-Euclidean geometries has helped revive positivist epistemologies), and on the eagerness of the official Marxists to turn the tables here, one is tempted to conclude that the prize is to gain the approval of physics: the truth of physics being agreed universally, the job of the philosopher is to prove that physics entails his world-view. We smile at medieval philosophers striving to prove what Revelation supplied anyway, but the job of his mid-twentieth century descendant seems similar. What makes us all so sure that physics is our Revelation[1] is of course the atom bomb, Sputnik, and technology generally. Just this verification by human practice is naturally claimed by the Marxist as a confirmation of his thesis (though it is something the 'bourgeois' positivist or pragmatist would not dream of wishing to deny); whilst the apparent irrelevance of the rival older philosophic interpretations (materialism, idealism) is precisely what underlines the positivist, pragmatist, etc., *re*-interpretation. It is this alleged irrelevance that the Marxists are most concerned to deny: if it obtained, the significant and exclusive claim of 'dialectical materialism' to be a scientific philosophy, to be *the* world-outlook of scientific civilisation and the sole repository of the authority and prestige conveyed by science, would lapse. The problem is however how to tie up Marxism and physical science closely enough to establish this claim, and yet not *so* closely as (a) to fall foul of the existence and excellence and historical importance of non-Marxist physicists, and (b) to hinder and irritate Soviet physicists. (The latter requirement is presumably more important: the former might, if it stood alone, be satisfied to some extent by censorship, rewriting of history, etc.) Light is thrown on the existence and particular form of this dilemma by Kolman's essay.

Two theories about physicists in a totalitarian society are I suppose now exploded. One is the theory that fundamental research is impossible without general intellectual freedom. The second theory is that whilst it *is* possible, it is achieved by a kind of internal iron curtain, by insulating scientific thinking from ideological thinking. This is more plausible, though it ignores two facts, the intelligence of the scientist and the stupidity of the ideologue: the latter cannot be trusted not to interfere even if the former could be trusted to keep his blinkers on. (Only a cynical ideologue might be good at surveying such an arrangement, and there is no evidence to suggest that the commissars are a species of Renaissance cardinal.) Anyway, plausible or not, it is clear on the internal evidence of recently published Soviet works, and particularly Kolman's pamphlet, that this did not occur either.

It is sometimes said of Soviet society and culture that it is at present passing through a Victorian stage. It does indeed display a characteristic nineteenth-century trait, the conflict between science and religion. We see earnest men facing the dilemma of how much freedom to allow to science, how much to concede to its discoveries, *without* undermining what they consider to be the essential ideological props of morals and society: or how much to insist on those ideological props without flying in the face of science or inhibiting it. Or perhaps one should look for an analogy earlier, in the Western Europe of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: quite obviously, on the internal evidence of these books, there must have been some anonymous Russian Galileo Galileievich Galileiskii of the Stalin period who went away from some Soviet Inquisition muttering, say, *à propos* of Heisenberg—'And yet it is undetermined!'

This analogy may be more apposite than the Victorian in as far as there appears to be little inclination on anyone's part to go the whole hog in the rejection of the social ideology, at any rate openly. The liberal wing try rather to make room for science as it now is and for

[1] Bertrand Russell has remarked somewhere that when physics and philosophy are in conflict, it is better to place one's confidence in physics. . . .

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

liberalism *within* Marxism by re-interpretation and by making it more abstract and formal, reminiscent of the way once tried by some *philosophes* in the West. I doubt whether the failure of the liberal wing to go further can be attributed only to the fact that views that *did* go further would not reach print. No doubt this plays a part, but I imagine that national pride of achievement, the desire not to upset too violently a social fabric which on the whole is accepted, *and* the fact that Marxism *can* be made sufficiently formal (as many belief systems can) to allow all necessary elbow-room inside, are also factors in the minds of those who think inside Russia today. One does not get the impression that, in making Marxism formal, they have even potentially the desire to go as far as Polish intellectuals have gone (with some of whom one has the impression of purely nominal Marxism covering an appalling intellectual anomie, scepticism and readiness to turn to anything).

Logically, Kolman's essay might well have been included in the collection *Some Philosophical Problems of Natural Science* which appeared recently in Moscow: one wonders whether its isolation is significant and connected with its strikingly liberal tone. It may be worth specifying what little I know (not, I should stress, from any internal evidence of the pamphlet) about its author.

Ernst Kolman was originally a native of Prague, where he studied mathematics before the First World War, and at that time his orientation was Jewish rather than, or as well as, Leftish. He became involved with Russian Communism when, having been sent to the Russian front with the Austrian army, he found himself in Russia during the Revolution as a prisoner of war. Like some others in that situation, he joined the Bolsheviks and spent the inter-war period in the Soviet Union. (He does, however, remark in the pamphlet that he visited Cambridge and Rutherford's laboratory in 1931.) He returned to Prague only after the Second World War to become Professor of Philosophy at the Caroline University: presumably the Czech Communist leaders in Moscow during the war decided that it would be useful to take him back, given the dearth of Czech Marxist theoreticians of any calibre.

In Prague he made a considerable impression as a speaker and was said to be close to and influential with Gottwald. Even during the Stalinist period he published a book on logic which I have read but no longer possess, of which however I remember that it gave clear signs of acquaintance with and recognition of Western philosophical logic, including as it did a description of Russell's paradox and the specification of Russell's solution of it, without however naming Russell. (It also contained a surprisingly naive discussion of probability and the status of empirical knowledge, equating the probability of beliefs with the number of instances supporting it.) An interesting story about him was brought back by one of the delegation of British Communist students to one of the many youth jamborees in Prague: namely, that he declined to speak on behalf of the Communist candidate in some student election, on the ground that his professional status required impartiality in such matters, and that the Communist students' organisation succeeded in forcing him to reconsider this and speak on their behalf by appealing over his head to the Party. At the same time, in the comparatively liberal atmosphere of Prague prior to 1948, he appears to have depressed non-Marxists by his dogmatic but well-delivered and influential lectures, directed at presenting Marxism as 'the only scientific philosophy.' In 1949 he was sent back to Russia because, it is believed, he criticised the Party leaders and their way of life. (Presumably he was in fact lucky not to be in Prague during the period of Stalin's last years.) He then became a Professor in Tiflis. Apart from the fact that he is given the title of 'Professor,' it is not possible to tell his present status from the pamphlet, which reproduces a public lecture delivered in Moscow.

Kolman's essay does admittedly very soon (in the fourth paragraph) bring in Lenin and *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*, thus legitimating his argument in the approved theological manner (though the first proper name mentioned is Roentgen). He does however soon go on to point out the fundamental transformation that physics has undergone in the half-century since Lenin wrote, and whilst the development of physics is asserted to have fully confirmed the

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

basic views of Lenin's work of genius, nonetheless 'it would be a mockery of the creative revolutionary spirit of Lenin's work' if we were to insist on every letter of his text or apply uncritically every part of his position, stated in 1908 and true then, to the physics of 1957.

Kolman goes on to indicate the two main features of modern physics: (1) Its dependence on a new and massive experimental technology, qualitatively different from the experimental technology of the nineteenth century, and illustrating the ultimate dependence of science on the productive forces of society, and (2) the extreme abstractness and mathematicisation of its theory. He makes use of the first point to attack the idealist philosophy of physics of the capitalist countries, which interprets physics as primarily or only theoretical. (It is in connection with this point that he mentions his visit to Rutherford's laboratory, where, as he mentions, Kapitsa was working at the time: he comments that Rutherford's equipment was still extremely simple and manufactured in an artisan-like way —with the exception of one powerful and essential dynamo—but that all this was the last survival of an out-of-date technology of research, only preserved so long 'thanks to the conservative English tradition.') I do not know whether there are indeed 'idealist' philosophers of physics who would deny such a connection—one would not expect the instrumentalists for instance to do so—though there may well be some who fail to stress it. Anyway, this is a fair and significant point, and it is unlikely that difficulties in squaring physics and Marxism will arise on this score. Such difficulties as there are arise in connection with the second point, the abstract, *i.e.* counter-intuitive and hence *prima facie* non-materialist concepts employed in physics.

Kolman is clearly a man of very considerable philosophic sophistication, and in his Marxist apologetics he in fact employs philosophic weapons drawn from other systems and which look odd in the Marxist armoury. For instance, when face-saving materialism against the relativisation of mass and energy and of matter and field in modern physics, he ultimately falls back on treating this as a striking *confirmation* of dialectical materialism, as follows: these oppositions merely show that both aspects are characteristics of one ultimate objective reality —active matter. This is of course a logical-grammatical point very familiar in recent bourgeois philosophy, *i.e.* the notion underlying the Aristotelian-Leibnizian view of the ultimateness of substance, and which really boils down to no more than that, with some ingenuity, any theory can be verbally reformulated in a subject-predicate form, as the attribution of some characteristics to some subject. One wonders whether Kolman himself really treats this argument seriously: one has the impression that he does not, for having stated it, he brusquely says 'But let us return to elementary particles,' and without further ado does so.

Elsewhere, criticising bourgeois cosmologies, he curiously employs the Kantian argument to the effect that the conception of the 'world as a whole' is contradictory (hence *bourgeois* cosmologies cannot be true: but does not this argument lend itself to a dangerous generalisation?), and also an argument about different types of truth, curiously reminiscent of contemporary Western philosophy, to the effect that assertions such as that the universe is infinite are of a different kind from, and cannot be confirmed similarly and with equal force as propositions such as 2 plus 2 make four or that we are all mortal.

I have not commented on his exposition of straight physics, which I am unqualified to assess but which seems to me excellent as exposition and akin in content to similar semi-popular expositions available here, with the exception of those points where he throws doubt on interpretations of physical theories, maintaining, for example, that whilst relativity lends itself to the inference of the finitude of the universe, it is nevertheless insufficient to establish it. It appears that it is insufficient not because of something specific to it, but *qua* physical theory, the concepts of finitude and infinitude being essential components of our world outlook (*i.e.* more fundamental than any physical theory); at this point we are taken back to 'dialectical materialism,' which is conveniently alleged to teach the incompleteness of our knowledge of the world at any given time —which presumably allows us to reject any interpretation not compatible with it (as illustrating that incompleteness). . . . We are once

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

again reminded of those attempts in the West to 'square' science and religion by stressing all convenient aspects of the former, but promptly invoking 'levels of truth' or whatnot when they conflict. Elsewhere he more than throws doubt, he appears to reject outright the doctrine of a cosmological commencement, on the grounds that such theories inevitably lead to the invocation of non-material causes and hence to religion. Do they? How pleased some of our theologians would be if this were so, if interpretations of science with us really were in general so systematically distorted as to support religion!

One of the points at which Marxist theology is indeed liable to conflict with the freedom of physics is cosmology: the supposed need to combat religious theories of the Creation and of the Last Judgment drive the 'dialectical materialist' into an attempt to make eternity of the world, its unboundedness in space, and the conservation of matter, into dogmas. Kolman tries to undermine some recent 'Western' cosmologies by suggesting that the 'expansion of the universe' may be a 'local' phenomenon restricted to our meta-galaxy, and also by suggesting that entropy cannot be predicated of the universe as a whole. Kolman does allow himself some derisive remarks about the 'astrophysicists Hoyle, Gold and Bondi,' rather unfairly giving the Russian reader the impression that theistic conceptions play a constitutive part in the theory of the permanent creation of matter. The present reviewer would at this point like to offer some aid to any Marxist who wishes to expose the full motives, the ideological roots of the views of Hoyle & Co. These roots do not really have anything to do with attempts to revive the Book of Genesis in modern dress. The real basis has always been obvious to me. The correct diagnosis is analogous to the classical one made by Marx and Engels of German Idealism, as offering the German bourgeoisie a transcendental consolation prize for the power it then so sadly lacked, and it runs as follows: in the nineteenth century, colonial empires were expanding, and the Western bourgeoisie was quite content with permanently conserved matter in physics. But *today*!—we are losing one colony after another! The terrified bourgeoisie is only too delighted to let Hoyle etc. console it with the doctrine that, whilst we are losing one *colony* after another, the amount of matter at least is increasing all the time. . . . (This is my own idea, but any Marxist writer on bourgeois ideology is welcome to borrow it, even without acknowledgement.)

However, Kolman's apologetics are less interesting than the liberal parts of his argument. He remarks towards the end that after the Twentieth Congress 'conditions in the Soviet Union favour the abandonment of dogmatism; they could bridge the gap between philosophy and the progress of science, and put an end to the notorious [*sic*] alienation of a part of our natural scientists from philosophy' (*i.e.*, Marxism). In a preceding passage he gives us information about how this alienation came about: 'It cannot be denied that some of our philosophers have in recent years committed crude errors, attacking certain scientific theories, such as Relativity, for no better reason than that its authors appear to be idealists and add idealistic interpretations to them, and have characterised these scientists as politically reactionary. Such a nihilistic [*sic*] attitude to the achievements of world science has done harm to our science and technology. It has also led to the alienation of (our) scientists from philosophy.' Kolman goes on to qualify this by saying that some scientists, previously attached to Mach-ian positions, utilising these errors of the (Marxist) philosophers, have rejected not only unfounded, but also justified criticisms. (Kolman does not pause to ask what tests can distinguish between the two kinds. . . .) Much dogmatism, *routineerism* (excellent word!—we most borrow that from the Russian), unwillingness to give way to new ideas and forces have used this for cover, it appears.

Kolman's problem clearly is the relation of philosophy (*i.e.* Marxism) and science: it is plain that he wishes to free physics from dogmatic control (and thereby incidentally mitigate the hostility of some Soviet physicists to Marxism), and yet he also wishes—or is obliged to pretend—to *deny* the neutrality, formality of philosophy, the possibility of, as he puts it, a 'non-interventionist' attitude on the part of philosophy. His official doctrine, embodying this compromise, comes out appearing somewhat strained. Philosophy is described as possessing

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more general laws than physics, but the 'concreteness of reality' is invoked to explain that, and how these more general laws do not entail laws of the determined, specific sciences, so that the scientist remains autonomous. And yet one must not fall into the 'positivist' error of making it altogether formal. . . . He comes very close to this: at one point he declares that the question of which of two physical theories is true will never be determined by 'methodological sympathies' but by practice, and although the use of the word 'practice' gives this a Marxist ring, he also implies that the possession of, say, Marxist methodological sympathies is no key to truth in the understanding of nature. . . .

Essentially, what Kolman is attempting to do is to provide free thought within science (which occurred anyway) with a charter, thus both assisting it and saving Marxism from the muted hostility of the scientists. He strives to do this by making Marxism more formal, by diminishing its cosmological commitments and making it rather into a doctrine about the general rôle and fate of human knowledge and, in connection with its status as a methodology, stressing the neutrality of method *vis-à-vis* content. He does of course have to face the opposition of those who maintain that to reduce Marxism to a methodology, and a neutral one at that, is to play into the hands of Western 'neopositivists' and hence of 'Idealism.' The successes and prospects of formalistic revisionism, so to speak, in raising the standards of discussion, as observable in recent Soviet publications, are far greater in the abstract and natural sciences than in the human and applied ones. Heresy would be more apparent, inevitable and dangerous in the human studies: at the same time, the potential heretics in the physical sciences are a more indispensable and hence tolerated group.

III

Leszek Kolakowski: or, Ethics and Communism

Leopold Labed

DJILAS remarks in his book that Marxism, and particularly its Soviet version, lacks a theory of political freedom, and it is not surprising therefore that the promise of the withering away of state compulsion is in practice replaced by the reality of the totalitarian state. It can be added that it also lacks a systematic theory of morality or ethics. That is not to say that Marx himself lacked moral fervour or that his dispersed remarks on this topic cannot be collected (as Mr. Rubel has done), and used to construct such a theory, either through empathy or through selective predilection. But the fact is, *pace* Engels, that nothing approaching a consistent theory has been left by the Founding Fathers of Marxism in this field. The theory of 'alienation' can be interpreted in such a way as almost to imply the rejection of what Professor Popper calls 'historicism'; on the other hand the rejection of 'eternal values' can imply ethical relativism, either class determined or culturally bound *à la* Westermarck. The theory of ideology as 'false consciousness' of facts is not necessarily relevant to values. The normative problem why the philosophers ought to change the world, rather than understand it only, is left open.

In Russia Marxism was from the beginning influenced by the Narodnik tradition and the revolutionary utilitarianism derived from Pisarev. Plekhanov proclaimed from the outset that *salus revolutiae—suprema lex*. Some of the arguments advanced by Trotsky in his excursion into the field of ethics, *Their morals and ours,* can be easily used to justify his murder in Mexico.

The revolutionary utilitarianism which was a reaction of the revolutionary intelligentsia to the Tsarist autocracy served after the Bolshevik revolution as camouflage for the interests of the party-state. The ethos of the 'apparatchiki' was summarised in the formula: *Partii eto nado, pri chem zdes moral?* (It's necessary for the Party, why bother about morality?).

The rise of the totalitarian state in Russia was accompanied by the virtual extinction of the intelligentsia, in its pre-revolutionary sense of the critics of the social order. The despotic traditions of Russian autocracy survived the up-

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

heaval, while the old intelligentsia, influenced by the West, did not. The situation was different in this respect in some East European countries. Although, after the war, the old intelligentsia was subjugated by a system imposed from outside, it survived and exerted considerable influence on the education of the young generation. For instance, the philosophical seminars in Polish universities became the training ground of future 'revisionism.' Some pre-war teachers, while paying lip-service to political orders, continued quietly to impart their knowledge to their students. Although the revulsion against totalitarian practices is similar everywhere, the protest against them takes a different form according to national traditions and cultural continuity. It is hardly an accident that reformist Communism found its first proponents among the Westernised intellectuals of the subjugated nations. It is also significant that while the older representatives of this tendency, among them many who were or are Communist *émigrés* in Russia such as Lukacs and Kolman, concentrate on the safer aspects of the doctrine, the young 'revisionist' intellectuals are clearly moved by moral revulsion; hence their interest in ethical questions.

The most interesting representative of this tendency is the young Polish philosopher, Leszek Kolakowski.

It is perhaps a little unjust to regard Kolakowski in his symptomatic rôle, only as illustrating a tendency; he deserves a hearing as a philosopher in his own right with a title in his sphere comparable to that of Djilas in the field of social analysis: not because of the originality of his ideas but because of the way he formulates them. It is, however, the first aspect which is more interesting for the Western reader: Kolakowski as a mirror of the philosophical anxiety of the Communist-educated intelligentsia, as a sign of protest against totalitarianism arising from within the system among the young generation, as an indication that the critical intelligence survives the totalitarian *Gleichschaltung* of minds.

From this angle Kolakowski's evolution is highly instructive and has more than individual significance.

Kolakowski was born in 1927; he was a schoolboy when the war broke out. He spent most of the time of the German occupation of Poland in a country house with a large library, which he used voraciously; after the war he finished secondary school, became a member of the Communist youth organisation, ZMP, and later of the Party, entered the philosophical faculty of Lodz University, and graduated in 1950. He was already regarded as a kind of prodigy. He was lecturing and publishing philosophical articles even before graduation. He became assistant to Professor T. Kotarbinski, the Polish philosopher and logician, and then to Professor A. Schaff, the leading Marxist spokesman in Poland. He received the degree of Candidate of Philosophy, lectured at the Party high school, the Institute of Social Sciences, and became a teacher in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Warsaw. He also became a member of the editorial board of the philosophical publication, *Mysl Filozoficzna*. He wrote a great deal, his early publications being mainly concerned with medieval philosophy and contemporary Catholic philosophy. He also published an essay on Avicenna. Later he became interested in Spinoza.

Although these early writings revealed too great an individual philosophical fervour for a good Party philosopher, they bear all the marks of orthodoxy. His opinions of the 'philosophical class enemies' conform to Soviet shibboleths. 'With the help of lying formulas,' he wrote, 'such as "man is the end of society," "society is for man, not man for society," social-democracy tries to achieve the same purpose as existentialist metaphysics: to oppose the freedom of the individual to the freedom of society, and as a corollary the "liberation of man" to the liberation of the social class; it tries to demonstrate that the genuine realisation of the rights of man is independent of the class struggle and of the objective laws of social development.' Nor did Kolakowski's disputes with Western analytical students of Marxism deviate from the familiar pattern:

'Because the old methods of struggle failed and Marxism, drawing strength from the victories of the world revolutionary movement and from the successes of the Soviet Union, and

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

confirmed by scientific developments, was expanding rapidly despite the united action of the police and bourgeois philosophers. . . . Catholic philosophers were given a new task. . . . One product is the fat book of the Austrian Jesuit, Gustav Wetter, a lecturer at the school for spies called the Papal Oriental Institute. . . . The basic class division of the world is replaced by a geographical division. There is no conflict between imperialism and socialism, only between "East" and "West." . . . The Atlantic philosophers, recruited to manufacture metaphysical justifications for the activity of the bourgeois police, and relying on the power of verbal mystification, believe that they can keep the working class in the West back from struggle by suggesting that they live in conditions of freedom and welfare, and by substituting for the word "imperialism" the word "West." . . . The idea that a theory can be at the same time class-determined and objective passes the Western comprehension. . . . Every clear idea explained in Marxist writings becomes an obscure puzzle in the mind of an obscurantist. That philosophical opinions express class interests; that it is in the interest of the progressive class to strive for an objective knowledge of the world; that the proletariat is the only class which is interested in an absolutely objective knowledge of the world, without any class limitations deforming the picture of reality; that, in consequence, the ideology of the working class, precisely because of its origin, is free from all mystifications and distortions in its cognisance of the world, which arise because of class limitations, and that, in contrast to the "Atlantic philosophy," the class character of Marxism is the source of and not a fetter on its objectivity—all these are truths familiar to every Marxist. . . . It is known what freedom of science means in bourgeois "democracies." . . . Everyone can dumbfound and deceive the people, the most anti-human theories are free to circulate. . . . Just as every American gangster can practise his profession *ad lib.*, if only he has enough money to pay the judges and police, so every intellectual gangster can bamboozle his readers if only he has enough money to publish his products. All this, of course, within a framework which does no harm to the existing order. . . . In the socialist countries the scientist and the philosopher must be responsible to the reader, and there is no freedom to cheat the people with the output of the morbid minds of any street charlatan. . . .'[1] At the time these essays were published Kolakowski went to Italy to attend, as an observer, the congress of Thomist philosophers in Rome in 1954—an indication of his enterprising spirit.

But his writings were changing character. They acquired a double meaning. When he attacked 'religious obscurantism' his formulations could be applied to Stalinist dogmas and rituals. He became an early and prominent exponent of the mounting wave of 'revisionism' among the young Polish Marxists, when the Polish 'thaw' presented an opportunity for more outspoken criticism. The change was marked well before the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. Underlying it was the moral protest against terror, lies, and intellectual petrifaction. In two articles, 'The End of the Age of Myths' and 'What is Socialism?' he summarised widespread but pent-up feelings; they remained unpublished in Poland but found their way to the West and the latter appeared eventually in *The New Leader* (February 18, 1957). It is probably the most laconic and witty indictment of the totalitarian state ever published. Defining 'what socialism is not' Kolakowski *ipso facto* defines what a totalitarian state is. Among other things it is a state 'in which a person who has committed no crime sits at home waiting for the police, in which there are more spies than nurses and more people in prisons than in hospitals, in which one is forced to resort to lies and compelled to be a thief, in which a person lives better because he does not think at all and which wants all its citizens to have the same opinions in philosophy, foreign policy, economics, literature, and ethics, in which the philosophers and writers always say the same as the generals and ministers, but always after them, in which one must each day refute what one affirmed the day before and always believe it to be the same.' In short, it is 'a state which

[1] These quotations are taken from Kolakowski's articles written between 1950 and 1954 and collected n *Essays on Catholic Philosophy*, Warsaw, 1955.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

does not mind being hated as long as it is feared.'

It took some time to reach such explicit conclusions ; although Kolakowski's evolution was a step ahead of his milieu, it was fairly representative of the ideological development of the young Polish 'revisionists.' Kolakowski became their most popular exponent, almost a spiritual guide. His philosophical expositions became more subtle and more sophisticated. In passing through the familiar cycle of disillusionment, he began to grasp and grapple with problems hitherto unsuspected or dismissed without understanding. The central theme of these spiritual struggles were the problems of ethics, and more particularly of conscience and history. His immediate concern was to rescue Marxism from what he termed its institutional degeneration. But at the same time he tried to find out how ethical questions can be solved within its framework.

In a series of essays before October, Kolakowski dealt with the major ethical and philosophical themes agitating the minds of the young Communist intellectuals. 'Kolakowski has made the first attempt at a philosophical analysis of the ideological crisis through which a great part of the Marxist intelligentsia in our country is passing,' said a reviewer of his collected essays, *Philosophy and Everyday Life.*

Disenchantment led him, like so many others, to tackle the problem of ends and means. He does not see the distinction made by Max Weber in *Politics as a Vocation* between an ethics of responsibility and an ethics of absolute ends. Nor does he see the tragic clash between the two depicted by Malraux in *La Condition Humaine.* Unlike Koestler in *Arrival and Departure,* he does not reject the principle that the 'end justifies the means,' but accepts it as does Trotsky in *Their Morals and Ours.*

However, he gives it a casuistic interpretation which widens the sphere of Communist ends to include moral considerations and *ipso facto* excludes evil means: 'Nobody becomes a Communist solely because of his conviction that Communism is historically inevitable; this inevitability has to be affirmed by a belief in its moral value . . . otherwise one should rather engage in a hopeless struggle against the inevitable in order to postpone it, instead of helping the evil only because in the end it is bound to prevail. . . . When the requirements of the struggle for power and the programme of economic expansion force their priorities on the Communist movement, it becomes a movement with economic and political content only, limited by its elementary tasks: Communism begins to be understood exclusively as a system of production facilitating the satisfaction of material needs. Only then does the problem of opposition between the political end and means used for its achievement appear; it is possible that the general end, which is the maintenance of power organising the new relations of production, will create the temptation to use instruments repulsive to the most primitive moral sensibility, but attractive because of their direct efficacy: the captured enemy can be compelled to confess by torture, an unpleasant thing, but not without its advantages; innocent people can be driven to forced labour, a disagreeable operation, but if the necessities of construction are too pressing. . . . Only when the immensity of crime strikes the conscience too strongly and shocks by its consequences, the moralist says: well, it is better to slow down the building of Communism, rather than cement it by blood. This is false: Communism is represented as a goal to reach which crime can be useful; it can be postponed by abandoning crime. But this is so only if the concept of Communism embraces nothing but production and power. Communists when pushed to crimes become criminals; they can help then to maintain power based on falsehood and fear but they cannot help in socialist construction. Because the concept of Communism contains not only relations of production and greater prosperity but also other goods and values which deserve to be regarded as *ends in themselves* and not only as means. There is nothing more indispensable than bread, and yet it is true, and this is an important truth, that man does not live by bread alone.'

Kolakowski used this biblical phrase months before a Soviet novelist chose it as the title of a book which was destined to make an international career. He now discovered that the Kantian phrase that 'man should be treated as

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an end in himself' is not just 'a typical bourgeois idea' but that 'it can prevent wrongs.' According to him 'the concept of Communism embraces also the concept of man under Communism, who should develop various moral and intellectual virtues. . . . Communism as an end cannot be reduced, by a misuse of abstraction, to Communist property relations. . . . Communism is also an improvement of the moral rules of collective life, which within its framework are *an end in itself*. . . . Communism so understood is an end which justifies the means; it is not difficult to perceive that it cannot be realised by means of political practices which educate the citizens of the socialist society in fear and lies. Because fear and lies are evil in themselves and should be combated as contrary to the ends of socialist construction. . . . The maintenance of power by criminal means is contrary to the ends of socialist construction and fetters its achievement.' Kolakowski's attacks on Thomism take another twist. He condemns it now because in it 'the individual's independence of society is compensated by an absolute dependence on the Church. Because of this, philosophy in progressive bourgeois thought, struggling against the theocratic claims of the Church, tried to legitimise the autonomy of man and his recognition as *an end in himself*.' At the time this essay was written it was already possible to read 'Party' for 'Church.'

Similarly, Kolakowski's debates with other trends in Christian philosophy also reflected his contemporary preoccupations.

'Personalist theories, notwithstanding their conservative or sometimes clearly reactionary political content, perceive certain real phenomena in social life, and give them a mythical and absolute shape; such ideas have social vitality partly because in their ideological activity Marxists today overlook and disregard these phenomena. Therefore it is particularly important that these problems should be dealt with by Marxists, as they are often brought to the attention of people by everyday life. . . . The most important problem among them is that of the relation of the freedom of the individual to the freedom of society in a socialist society. . . . It was rightly assumed that the human personality, *i.e.* the sum total of the conscious ways of reacting, is shaped by social environment (which also includes, indirectly, the influence of the past social environment, transmitted by heredity). This assumption is clearly false if it is understood in the sense that belonging to a class determines the individual's entire social life and behaviour; it is clear that social situations shaping individual personality differ in many respects for every man and it is true therefore that every individual is in a sense unique. *No individual embodies the essence of social class in its pure form and cannot be reduced to it.*' It is not surprising that Kolakowski became sceptical of the possibility that conflicts between the interests of society and individual interests would disappear.

Kolakowski seems to accept what in Western discussions of ethics came to be called the 'naturalistic fallacy,' but he is uneasy about it. He rejects the idea that 'moral norms and postulates may determine the content of philosophical knowledge, *i.e.* that "practical reason" may in this sense have primacy over speculative reason, not only inspiring it but ordering it. . . . No normative statements can give us direct knowledge of the world.'

While trying to rescue the rationalist tradition of Marxism, Kolakowski stresses the independence of positive knowledge from normative interference (in which the Party excels); while trying to find the moral roots of behaviour he identifies general outlook (in the sense of *Weltanschauung*) with philosophy itself, unlike the logical positivists, and does not restrict philosophy to logical or linguistic analysis. It is according to him 'the sum total of beliefs influencing human behaviour, evaluated morally by society, either praised or condemned (and influencing behaviour according to moral evaluation).' Kolakowski is not only heretical about Engels' treatment of moral knowledge, but contradicts him directly on knowledge in general. Rejecting the positivistic interpretation of philosophy, he also denies the Marxist contention about its end and its transformation into positive knowledge under full Communism. He asks whether 'the recognition of the class character of philosophical thinking means the death of philosophy in a classless society?' and gives an emphatically negative answer: 'The

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

social functions of philosophy do not die away when its class functions come to an end. . . . In a society which, in the words of Engels, "will not only overcome class antagonisms, but also forget about them," and in which "a truly human morality" will rule, the need for philosophical knowledge cannot wither away, since its proper source, which is the moral life of people, will not dry up; to be sure, we want to transform and revolutionise that life, not only as a means of political, economic, and technical change, but also as an end in itself. The freedom of man is a programme for all spheres of human life.'

Although Kolakowski's essays dealt with abstruse philosophical problems, they were very popular and were probably read by a far wider public than was likely to grasp his argument, because it was felt that in his essays he was striving to give an interpretation of Marxism more in conformity with popular attitudes than the official one. But Kolakowski often descended from abstract theory to the more accessible level of political practice. A particularly strong impression was made by his three essays on the relation of 'institutional Marxism' to politics, 'Intellectuals and the Communist Movement' (*Nowe Drogi,* September, 1957), 'Topical and Obsolete Notions of Marxism' (*Nowa Kultura,* January 27, 1957), and 'The Meaning of the Term "Left-wing"' (*Po Prostu,* February 24, 1957).

The first, published in the theoretical organ of the Party on the eve of Gomulka's assumption of power, was a sort of 'revisionist' Manifesto against 'the impasse in which Marxist theory finds itself at present,' and against Party control of culture, particularly science. 'The political inspiration of the Communist movement, which derives intellectually from the entire rationalist tradition of European thought, cannot lead to the distortion of scientific truth for the purpose of proving truths laid down in advance.'

In the second article Kolakowski distinguishes between 'intellectual' and 'institutional' Marxism. In the past 'Marxism meant a doctrine defined only formally, in accordance with the decree in force at the time. This decree was issued by the "Infallible Institution" and at a certain stage this meant the "Greatest Linguist," the "Greatest Philosopher," the "Greatest Economist," and the "Greatest Historian in the World."' He draws the conclusion that 'with the improvement of the research apparatus of the humanistic science, the idea of Marxism as a special trend will decline, and after some time completely wither away, as did "Newtonism" in physics, "Linnæism" in botany, "Harveyism" in physiology, and "Gaussism" in mathematics. This would mean that what is lasting in Marxism will be assimilated by the spontaneous process of scientific evolution.'

It is interesting to note how Kolakowski's own evolution repeats the stages of mental evolution of the Western left intelligentsia of the 'thirties. The points he raises and the formulations of his ideas would fit very well into the post-war *Partisan Review* symposium on the 'Future of Socialism.' In fact, the parallel between Marxism and social science and the rôle of Newton's theories in physics was drawn there by one of the participants (it was also previously formulated by Koestler). But while some of the disillusioned Western *illuminati* doubt the contemporary relevance of the division between 'Right' and 'Left,' Kolakowski defends its significance. In the third article, he maintains that 'the "Left" is not a defined political movement or a Party or a concentration of parties. "Leftism" is a quality which may be attributed in greater or less degree to any movement, or party, or even to individuals.' He concludes that 'the Communist movement which sacrifices its ideology to its current tactical needs is condemned to degeneration and defeat, as it can exist only with the support of the state and the means to impose its will by force. The moral and intellectual values of Communism are not an embellishment of its activities but the condition of its existence. . . . The Communist movement which chooses sheer tactics, and loses its basic intellectual and moral principles, ceases to be a leftist movement. This is why the word "Socialism" has ceased to be synonymous with the world "Left."'

Like other Polish 'revisionists' advocating 'humanitarian socialism,' Kolakowski has drawn the fire of the Soviet guardians of the doctrine. He was attacked during the meeting of the Institute of Philosophy at the Soviet Academy

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Sciences in Moscow, attended by a delegation of Polish philosophers which included Kolakowski. A special article was also devoted to him in *Voprosy Filosofii* (No. 4, 1957), by E. A. Komarov and S. I. Mikhailov, entitled 'Old Tunes in a New Form.'

He is accused of distorting facts, opposing the organisational unity of the Communist movement and the ideological unity of Marxists. 'According to Kolakowski's peculiar logic . . . Marxism is anti-Marxism, and anti-Marxism is Marxism; black is white and white is black. . . . This Marxism à la Kolakowski permits one to preach bourgeois views, to be an idealist, an eclectic, an opportunist. . . . Kolakowski, obviously speaking with someone else's voice, expounds a "philosophy" which is allegedly called upon to replace "obsolete Marxism" but in fact repeats the themes of agnosticism and idealism. He attempts to refute dialectical and historical materialism by using the ideas which are currently fashionable in bourgeois philosophy.' This is followed by a comparison designed to show the coincidence of ideas between certain excerpts from Kolakowski's writings and from the works of Bertrand Russell, John Dewey, Benedetto Croce, and P. Gardiner. No attempt is made to discuss the merits of the ideas expressed in these quotations; it is enough to demonstrate their concurrence to damn Kolakowski. The critics were particularly incensed because, according to them, 'he gives the vague name of "the new non-capitalist society" to the socialist system in the USSR. . . . Kolakowski naïvely thinks that the individual mistakes of one man, even though he was such an outstanding personality as Stalin, however serious they may have been, could arbitrarily change the whole trend of social development, the nature of the social system of the USSR.'

Other critics soon followed suit and began to attack Kolakowski. He was solemnly castigated at a conference of philosophers from the Soviet Union and the satellite countries held in Prague in October, 1957. 'At the conference some revisionist theses were energetically condemned, as, for instance, those in an article published in No. 4 of the Polish review of philosophy, *Mysl Filozoficzna*' (*Contemporanul,* November 22, 1957). Kolakowski was on the editorial board of *Mysl Filozoficzna,* which has now been replaced by *Studia Filozoficzne,* of which he is editor-in-chief. The Rumanian critics noted with satisfaction that 'at the 9th Plenum of the Polish United Workers Party a series of revisionist opinions was severely censured, such as, for instance, those of Kolakowski, who considered that there is no opposition between socialist and bourgeois democracy' (*Contemporanul,* September 13, 1957). The Czechoslovak Party ideologist, recently rescued from oblivion, Dr. Jindrich Filipiec, attacked Kolakowski in an article, 'On the philosophical problems of the struggle against revisionism' (*Nova Mysl,* No. 9, 1957), which was subsequently broadcast over Prague Radio to reach a wider audience. The Polish *Digest of Political Theory* (November, 1957), which reproduced Filipiec's article, pointed out that he had distorted Kolakowski's ideas, similar, incidentally, to those formulated by Sidney Hook a year later in his article 'Socialism and Liberation' (*Partisan Review,* No. 4, 1957), in which he referred, using Christianity as an example, to the possibility of a transformation within an ideological tradition.

Undaunted by attacks, Kolakowski wrote in September, 1957, a series of articles in *Nowa Kultura,* containing the most thorough and far-reaching polemic with Marxist philosophical fundamentals ever written by a Communist under a Communist régime. They are written in a fairly obscure form, but it is clear that Kolakowski's evolution had reached a new stage. Unlike Western ex-believers in 'the God that failed,' Kolakowski is bound by political necessity to retain a certain ideological relationship with the deity. This does not make him less but probably more dangerous by the ruling orthodox standards. 'Responsibility and History,' as the articles are called, again deal with the problem of political obligation. The appeal to 'History' as the ultimate court of justice is rejected even more radically than before. The relationship between ends and means and facts and values is stated more explicitly and the moral orientation is still more pronounced. Kolakowski puts the problem squarely: 'Is it possible to formulate a general principle which governs the mutual relation between our knowledge of historical necessities

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and our moral convictions, between the world of existence and the world of values, between reality and obligation?' He warns his readers that 'generalities can be used to justify absolutely everything' and recalls that 'ten or eleven years ago a similar discussion took place in Poland concerning socialist humanism and the relationship of morality to history. . . . One of those who took part in that discussion, who used the pen-name Pawel Konrad, has been withdrawn from historical circulation, murdered by the missionaries of historical justice. Those who take part in the discussion today should remember this when they return to those arguments (then used by myself) and repeat them in an unchanged form. They should remember, I say, how much, in the past and therefore in the future, can be justified and sanctified by sweeping statements about historical necessity, political realism, and the dilemma of one alternative only to which the world has allegedly been condemned.' He goes on to say: 'No one is exempt from the moral duty to fight against a system of government, a doctrine, or social conditions which he considers vile and inhuman, by resorting to the argument that he finds them historically necessary. We protest against this form of moral relativism, in which it is assumed that the criteria of the moral evaluation of human conduct can be deduced from a knowledge of the mysteries of the *Weltgeist*. This is not a protest against the thesis of the actual dependence of human moral convictions on human social situations, but only against attempts at normative interpretations of history, that is, against drawing conclusions concerning duty from necessity, against searching for criteria of moral judgment in the laws of history, against a doctrine which is content to evaluate the past morally by its effects on the present or judge the present by its results in the future, in regard to which it imagines itself to be in possession of complete and infallible knowledge.' This Kolakowski regards as 'Marxism for the poor in social theory which is supplemented by Hegelianism for the poor in moral doctrine.' In an imaginary conversation between a Clerc (the term is borrowed from Benda) and the anti-Clerc, Kolakowski clearly states his sympathies with the former:

'I know—says the Clerc—that you *preach* the general principle of historicism, but I have failed to notice that you practise it. . . . Your relativism is camouflaged by an appearance of fictitious unchangeability. You have values which change profoundly every day, and every day they are proclaimed as final. . . . It is a peculiar cult that preaches monotheism, but every day has a new deity to be worshipped. . . . I never know what will be the future result of our present action. Therefore I refuse to agree that supreme moral and intellectual values should be sacrificed on the altar of goals whose future is uncertain. I know, on the contrary, that the means applied necessarily leave an imprint on the final result. . . . I shall never believe that the moral and intellectual life of mankind conforms to the laws that prevail in economic investments, that is, that one should expect better results tomorrow by saving today, *i.e.* use lies for the triumph of truth and take advantage of crime in order to pave the way for righteousness. I know that often it is necessary to choose between two evils. But when both possibilities are evil in the extreme, I will do everything to refrain from making a choice. In this way I still choose something, if only man's right to his own judgment of the situation in which he finds himself. This is not so little. . . . Lasting moral values, achieved in the long development of man up to this moment, are the surest support we possess if circumstances demand from us a choice which, ultimately, has also a moral character. In any case, they are more trustworthy than any philosophy of history. And this is the reason why, finally, I stick to my opinion.'

'Whatever happens?'

'Whatever happens.'

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DOCUMENT

English and American Literature after 1917 mirrored in a Soviet textbook

We reproduce below, without cuts or comments, Chapter 1, *Part* 3, *and Chapter* 1, *Part* 8, *of J. Gilinsky, L. Khvostenko, A. Weise,* Studies in English and American Literature and Style, *State Textbook Publishing House of the Ministry of Education of RSFSR, Leningrad,* 1956.

American Literature after 1917

With the advent of the epoch of imperialism the bourgeois culture in America entered a phase of decline.

The activities of American imperialists at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries gave rise to a reactionary literature that extolled the policy of strength and colonialism.

On the other hand the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia awakened new forces among the intellectuals of the world. As Lenin has it, there are two cultures in every national culture, one that serves the people, this being the true national culture, and the other that serves the interests of the ruling classes. The same we observe in the American culture of today.

There was a particularly marked division in American literature in the post-war period when the coming into being of the mighty camp of peace and democracy headed by the Soviet Union made it necessary for every writer to determine his attitude towards the people and the struggle for peace and democracy.

In the post-war years the reactionary American literature became a medium of imperialist propaganda. A dirty stream of cheap books such as detective novels and comics is intended to corrupt the mind of the average American, awaking animal instincts and inculcating the ideas of man-hatred.

But the aggressive circles of America are opposed by the America of honest and peaceful people. The philosophy of decay filling the pages of reactionary writings is opposed by the advanced progressive American literature. Ever-increasing numbers of American people are uniting in the struggle for peace and co-operation among nations.

Democratic American literature is in the forefront of this struggle. It derives strength from the popular movement and realistically reflects the social processes going on in the U.S.A. In his historical novels the outstanding American author and ardent patriot of his country, Howard Fast (see), castigates the policy of the American imperialists, the extermination of the Indians and persecution of the Negroes.

Other works by H. Fast are devoted to the portrayal of the workers' movement. They emphasise the impossibility of reconciliation between the antagonistic classes of workers and capitalists. They are imbued with a spirit of optimism and faith in the inevitable victory of the working class.

Some works of another prominent progressive author, Albert Maltz (see), expose the reactionary organisations in the U.S.A. and delineate images of class-conscious fighters against capitalists.

The struggle of American workers against capitalists under the Communist leadership constitutes the main theme of *The Great Midland* by Alexander Saxton (b. 1912). There is a group of American Negro writers and poets consistently fighting against racial discrimination for a recognition of their human rights. Progressive Negro literature called forth the talented writer Langston Hughes (b. 1902). Many of his poems are imbued with a passionate revolutionary pathos. In his verses and short stories L. Hughes calls upon all Negroes to become active fighters for freedom and democracy.

If Fast, Maltz and some other American writers follow the method of socialist realism, there are in America as well as in other capitalist countries writers who adhering to the traditions of critical realism create truthful and sincere pictures of life. These are Upton Sinclair (b. 1878), Sinclair Lewis (1885-1950), Ernest

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hemingway (b. 1898), Mitchel Wilson (b. 1913) and others. There are again such writers in America who in their artistic work follow different trends which are sometimes far from realism but who aim at the same objectives as other progressive writers and who collaborate in the noble task of bringing about durable peace and co-existence of nations [William Faulkner (b. 1897) and others].

The whole of progressive American literature is in the prime of its development. It professes faith in the triumph of progressive forces and selflessly serves the interests of its people and the whole of humanity.

English Literature after 1917

The general crisis of capitalism after the First World War and the Great October Socialist Revolution brought about an aggravation of the struggle between the different trends in English literature and art.

The Great October Socialist Revolution exercised a powerful influence on the minds and outlook of the people of the entire world. The best representatives of the English intellectuals such as Shaw (see), Wells, Fox (see) and others energetically supported Soviet Russia. There were others, however, who were openly hostile to the young Soviet Republic.

The decay of bourgeois culture found reflection in the intensification of the tendencies that have already manifested themselves at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries in the works of decadent writers.

Extreme individualism, pessimism, and cynicism became the most characteristic traits of such well-known post-war writers as James Joyce (1882-1941), Henry David Lawrence (1885-1930), Thomas Stearns Eliot (b. 1888), Aldous Huxley (b. 1894) and others.

On the other hand, Shaw, Wells and Galsworthy continued to produce realistic works of considerable merit.

There were also other post-war writers who, adhering to the principles of critical realism, created a number of interesting books. The most conspicuous of these writers were Edmund Morgan Forster (b. 1879), Richard Aldington (b. 1892), John Boynton Priestly (b. 1894) and Archibald Joseph Cronin (b. 1896). Their work, however, is marked with disillusion and scepticism.

The period between the two wars witnessed the growth of a literature that was closely connected with the progressive social movement of the people. The most distinguished figures in British progressive literature were R. Fox (see), John Sommerfield (b. 1904) and Sean O'Casey (see).

After the Second World War the progressive writers of Great Britain, J. Lindsay (see), J. Aldridge (see) and others bound their lives with the struggle of the working people for peace, democracy and social progress. In their literary work they follow the method of socialist realism, the main characters of their books being workers, farmers, and progressive-minded intellectuals.

Nowadays British writers of different ideological and artistic trends find common language in their joint fight for peace. Thus the struggle for peace helps to unite all progressive-minded men of letters of the world and promotes mutual understanding and international cultural contacts.

Printed by the Sharon Press, 31, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Leonard Schapiro

The English reactionary historian, L. Schapiro, finds the cause of the revolutionary activity of the Russian people in the aggressive instincts of the 'primitive Russian masses' ruled by emotions and capable only of violence and plunder. . . . Moreover, piling one sophistry upon another, L. Schapiro propagates the slanderous version of the white guard Oldenburg, that the Communist Party after coming to power on November 7 'did not promise an immediate peace' but 'at the demand of the Mensheviks' agreed to promulgate the decree on peace only on November 8. In this way the contemporary ideologists of imperialism, ready to use any means, are distorting the peaceful policy of the Soviet state (*ibid.*).

Hugh Gaitskell

The right wing of the Labour Party has deemed it necessary to make a sharp turn on the problem of nationalisation. It now openly repudiates a programme of further nationalisation and of any change in the character of the nationalised industries. In this connection it is worth noting the recently published pamphlet of the leader of the Labour Party, Hugh Gaitskell, *Socialism and Nationalisation*. . . . Gaitskell regards the workers' discontent at being eliminated from participation in the management of the nationalised industries merely as a consequence of their 'harmful illusions.' According to him, the workers should completely renounce the idea that the purpose of nationalisation is an immediate improvement of their situation. . . . Thus the Labour leader himself admits that nationalisation in essentials embodied the interests of monopoly capital (*Mirovaya Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnie Otnosheniya*, No. 3, 1957).

John Strachey and John Galbraith

The recently published book by Strachey, *Contemporary Capitalism*, is a significant event in anti-Marxist literature. . . . Strachey takes the position of the bourgeois economists on the question of the effects of capital concentration. Unable to deny, in face of the incontrovertible facts, that the concentration of economic power is taking place, he nevertheless asserts that 'countervailing powers' exist. In this, Strachey is not original; the theory of 'countervailing powers' has been formulated by the American bourgeois economist, John Galbraith. . . . According to the Strachey-Galbraith theory, the power of monopolies is balanced by other forces, and monopolies possessing real economic and political power are put on the same level as trade unions and farmers' organisations, which do not possess power and are constantly under pressure from the monopolistic state (*Kommunist*, No. 17, 1957).

T. B. Bottomore and M. Rubel

We have before us a book published in London by a respectable bourgeois publishing house, Watts & Co., *Karl Marx: Selected writings on sociology and social philosophy*. The editors of this collection and the authors of an introductory article are T. B. Bottomore, lecturer in sociology at London University, and M. Rubel, a member of the National Centre of scientific research in Paris. The appearance of such a collection is proof that bourgeois science can no longer continue its policy of complete silence on the teachings of K. Marx. . . . The 'explanatory' article by Bottomore and Rubel is objectively only an attempt to emasculate the teaching of Marx by depriving it of its essence, historical materialism, and the theory of scientific socialism, and thus to transform the great founder of scientific socialism into a rank bourgeois sociologist. . . . The authors use methods which are inadmissible in science and which lead to the distortion of the content of Marx's works (*Voprosy Filosofii*, No. 5, 1957).

Howard Fast

Howard Fast found himself at the very bottom with lightning speed. . . . This ex-worker, ex-Communist, and ex-progressive writer has abandoned his cause, betrayed it, renounced the banner under which he conducted the struggle, and gone over to the camp of the enemy. In order to justify this desertion before the world, before his former friends and perhaps before himself, he does what everyone before him whose 'conscience was aroused' did in the past: he attacks the USSR and the Communist Parties, and spits on everything which he advocated not long before. He behaves like the anarchist writer, Upton Sinclair, whose novels also made a great impression in our country, but who ended as an enemy of the USSR and of socialism. The power of American dollars is great and Howard Fast is not the first man to surrender to it (*Tvorba*).

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ENCOUNTER

EDITED BY STEPHEN SPENDER
AND IRVING KRISTOL

ENCOUNTER is now the leading monthly review of its kind in the English language. Embracing literature, the arts and current affairs, it counts among its contributors ALDOUS HUXLEY, W. H. AUDEN, EDMUND WILSON, ISAIAH BERLIN, PETER WILES, LIONEL TRILLING, ARTHUR KOESTLER, H. R. TREVOR-ROPER, and many others of similar stature.

Indispensable articles on Soviet Russia and her satellites frequently appear in ENCOUNTER. Recent examples: "L'Affaire Djilas" by R. H. S. Crossman, Morgan Phillips, and Richard Lowenthal; "Poland, Left of Centre" by George Watson; "Russia's Young Intellectuals" by Kathryn Feuer; "Two Wandering Satellites" by Peter Wiles; "The Magic of Marxism" by Michael Polanyi. A monthly feature, "From the Other Shore," analyses recent cultural trends in the Communist world.

As a correspondent in the *New Statesman* put it: "ENCOUNTER is the one periodical that truly expresses the Fifties. It has articles about foreign events and trends, is markedly international in outlook, and is well aware of the new forces in society today."

The cost of a year's subscription is £2 (U.S. $7.50), including postage, payable to your newsagent or direct to ENCOUNTER at the address below.

Specimen copy on request

25 HAYMARKET, LONDON, S.W.1

The American Slavic and East European Review

Edited by scholars from twelve universities in the United States and devoted to consideration of history, economics, political science and literature in East Europe with special emphasis on the Soviet period. Quarterly.

$5.30 per annum to Columbia University Press, New York City 27, New York, USA, or two guineas to Basil Blackwell, Ltd., Oxford, England.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED